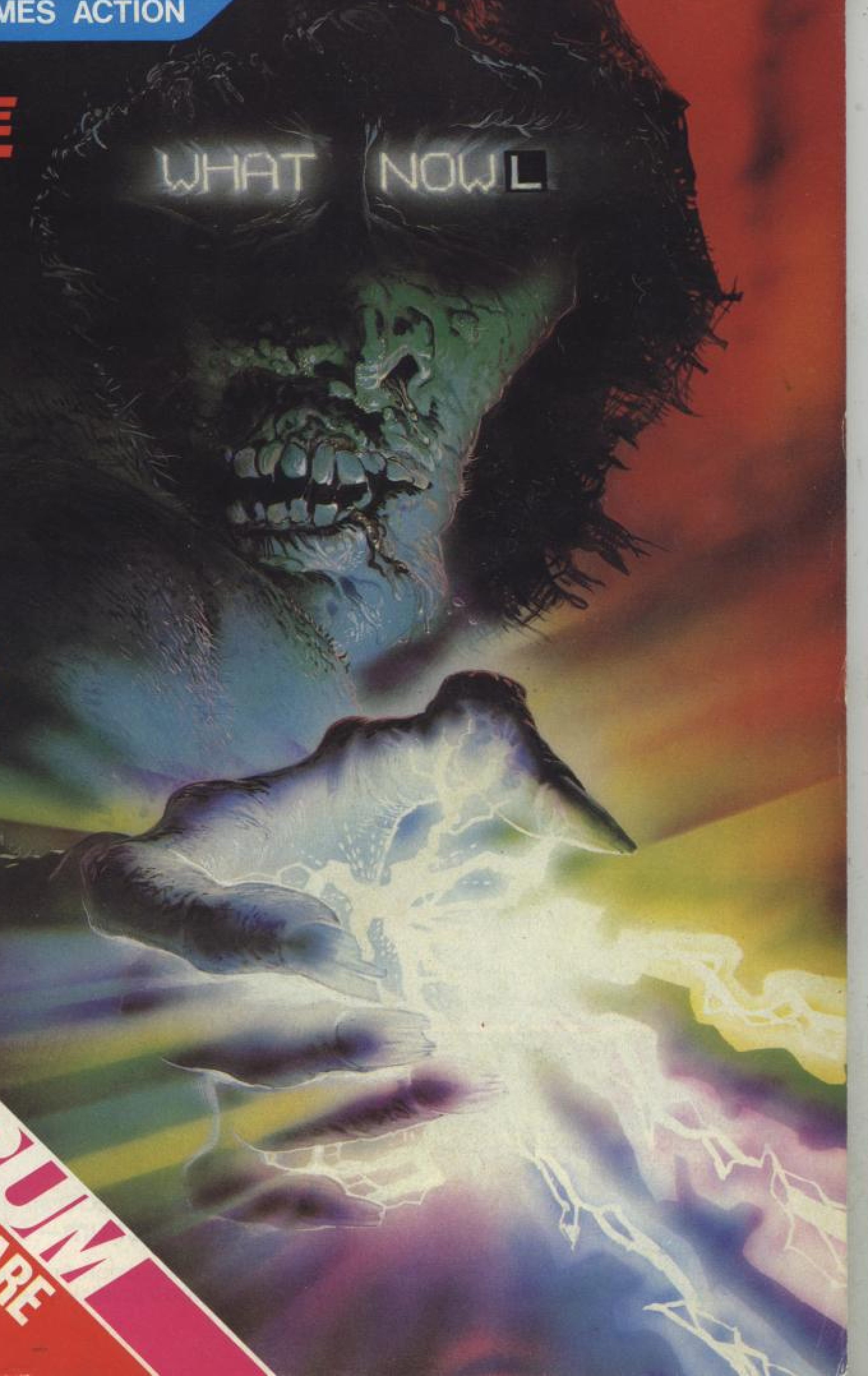
CRASH

No4 MAY 1984
75p

MICRO GAMES ACTION



ADVENTURE

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Gilsoft's THE QUILL spawns monsters

Time to set off on our
ADVENTURE TRAIL

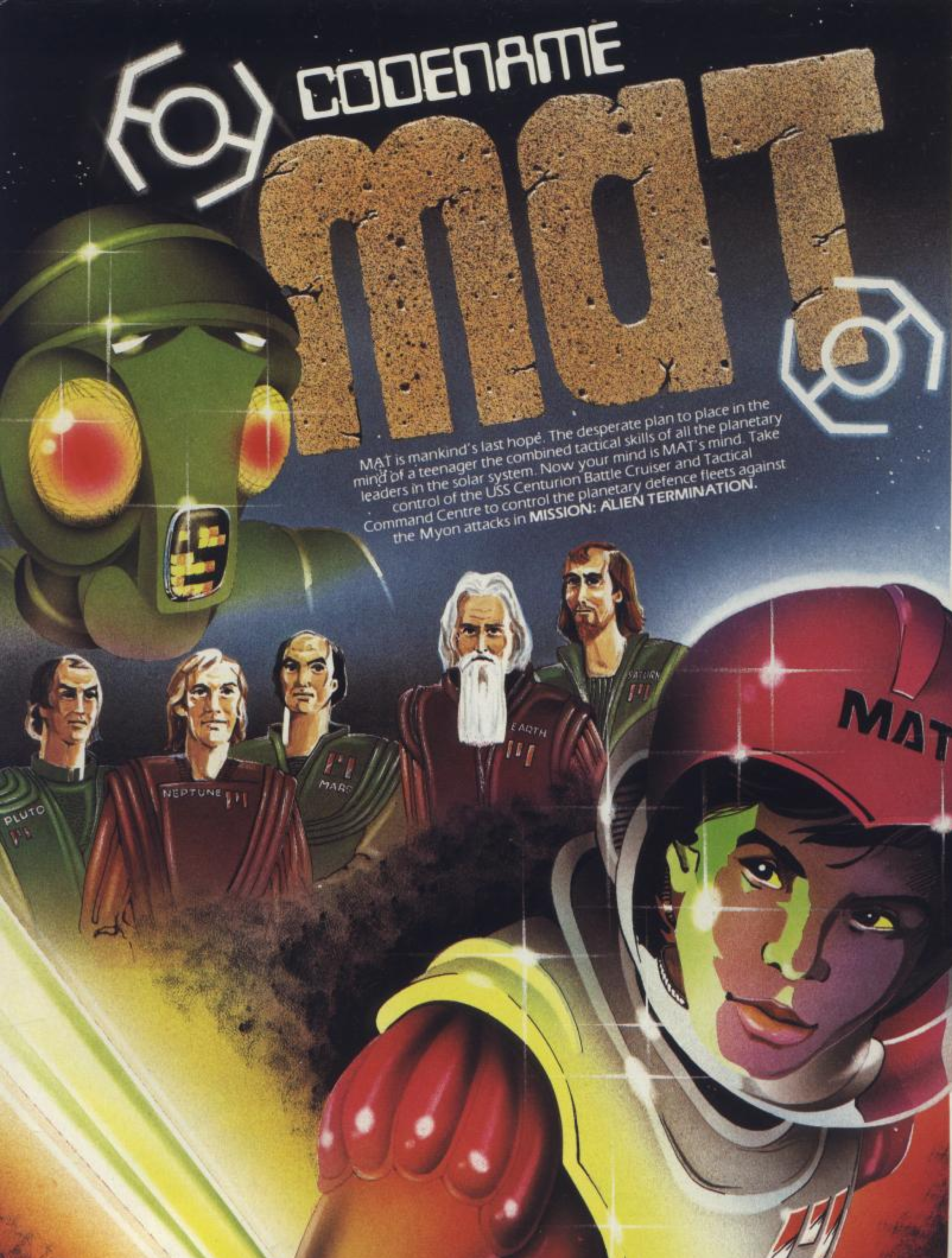
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NOMEN LUDI

There's been a lot of talk in recent years about microchip technology andthe way it is changing our lives. Many sociologists have likened the microchip revolution to that of the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries. At that time invention and development was very much in the hands of inspired people, greed not playing an unimportant role in the inspiration! The Victorians have left us a large legacy of institutions funded by that wealth. But what most characterised the period was the strength of the individual spirit. In so many respects the computer games market echoes that spirit.

It is a market in which entrepeneurs and talented people can flourish, and have done. Britain has been particularly rich in individual effort as regards games software. As in the 19th century, what started as a cottage industry has grown into a major business. Only the time scale has altered – two years ago it barely existed, the tip of the iceberg being the tiny classified ads in the new computer magazines.

Of course the development of microchips and microprocessers has been in the hands of corporations, usually American, certainly not a cottage industry. But it is the efforts of individuals which has made so much software available. And no advance has been as spectacular as that of Spectrum games.

It would be easy to dismiss the development of games software as a frivolous side issue of little importance in the general scheme of things. Yet the director of a well known software house that also does commercial software development, told me that in his opinion some of the best programmers in the world are to be found writing games for the Spectrum. The skills they have had to develop would put those of programmers in what might be called the more serious market to shame.

Marketing pressures and theincreasing sophistication of the games market, have inevitably forced most of those early cottage industries into much bigger concerns. Yet the spirit remains, and it is a sign of the strength of that spirit that completely new companies like **Gargoyle Games** of Birmingham can emerge with a game as sophisticated and impressive as *Ad Astra* (which is reviewed in this issue). So as owners and user of the ZX Spectrum, we can feel proud to belong to a tradition barely out of the cradle that yet has achieved astounding things. And don't think that because you may only be a player of games that you haven't had a lot to do with that achievement. Nothing is worth anything until it is used as it was intended. A game cannot exist without a market to purchase it, and it dies without the feedback the market offers. The feedback isn't only financial, it's also an emotional spark which finds its way back to publisher and author. Because of that vital interest in good games we can now look at an astonishing range of programs of high quality.

WALKING THE PLANK

Sadly, a lot of this is at risk. Because producing computer games is a financial business, and development, marketing and duplication costs can be very high, software houses need all the revenue they are supposed to receive from the sale of their games. The cancer rotting in the heart of the British software industry is **Piracy**.

According to **GOSH** (Guild of Software Houses), piracy of software is costing the industry £100 million a year! Some estimates have put the figure higher. Of course the percentage of that figure made up by Spectrum software is much smaller, but the scale is still staggering. Commercial piracy probably doesn't affect the games market to a worrying degree, though there have always been the rip-off merchants and 'Bring and Buy' boys at the trade shows, who can offer brand new games at less than trade prices. One such notorious offender has been the bearded young gent who trades ZX Microfairs in London under the name of Chichester Discounts, and who was seen on on occasion handling large quantities of an EMAP publication, *Your Robot* at a recent ZX fair. These people do damage, but it's not irreparable.

The most serious damage is done by the public themselves. It has become fashionable to run computer clubs as copy clubs. We are told that schools are hotbeds of software copying, user groups actually run mini production lines at their evening meetings and can steal as many as 2000 copies of successful individual titles at one go. According to **Imagine Software** seven copies for each legitimate product sold can be considered as realistic. At this sort of rate it is easy to see what a 'harmless' little activity like getting together with a few friends to copy some games is doing. The outcome is sadly obvious. Small software houses with very in-demand games are the most susceptible to the cancer, but even the biggest can't escape the consequences of the financial slump copying causes. The logical conclusion is that games software for the Spectrum will cease being produced.

Is this what we really want? It's known as killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

The computer press has also to bow its head in shame, or perhaps it has only paid lip service to the software business seeing it as a good source of advertising revenue and nothing more – just put a few games reviews in to keep the punters buying! In the grapple for advertising revenue, magazine after magazine has offered space to pirates and discount clubs, which usually disappear after a couple of months of ads have resulted in the desired response to those three famous games for 99p. They have also allowed the most blatant of classified ads to go in, offering copying services, and even cheap copies made from original tapes.

PIRACY 'CONDONED' BY COMPUTER MAGAZINE

There's obviously a conflict of opinion about piracy between some of the computer magazines and the software industry which largely supports the publications with their advertising revenue. If editors of magazines continue to turn a blind eye to the situation, then they will only have themselves to blame when the revenue dries up because games companies can't afford to advertise any more.

The most blatant and astonishing case of editorial idiocy recently came from the March issue of *COMPUTER CHOICE* magazine. In his editorial **Bill Bennett** admits to copying programs for 'back up' reasons, wilfully ignoring that so many 'back up' copies are sold in their thousands by pirates. He sees nothing wrong with this, says it can't be stopped, and offers this comforting crumb of wisdom: 'Furthermore, there is no better advertisement for a company's next game than a well-loved, constantly played copy of the previous game, even if it was pirated.'

He sets out by saying, 'Software companis are for ever moaning about software pirates. . . . They complain that the activity is robbing them of profit. While there is no doubt that such activity does go on, it is not anything like the amount of harm that the moaners suggest.'

Bill Bennett, *Computer Choice* and Business Press International have evidently looked into the matter a great deal more thoroughly than the software houses to make such assertions. Equally, they would no doubt be

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happy for user groups to buy one copy of their magazine and then distribute thousands of illegal copies free of charge. At the same time, *Computer Choice*, like a number of other computer magazines, effectively condone the activities of pirates by allowing the advertisement of copycat programs. It must seem strange, then, that software houses continue to advertise with magazines when this is the official attitude.

HAM PIRATES

Mike Fitzgerald, of **A&F Software**, evidently does not share Bill Bennett's happy-go-lucky attitude to software pirates. Mr Bennett in his editorial admits to the possibility that, 'only half the copies in circulation are "official".' Mike Fitzgerald considers **Imagine's** claim that for every one copy sold seven illegal ones exist, is actually conservative. And he has good reason to believe his figures rather than those of (the well-informed) Mr Bennett.

As a result of information placed before A&F by a radio ham, Mike Fitzgerald has uncovered a conspiracy on the air waves of staggering proportions. Mike claims that software houses are currently losing between £5,000 and £20,000 per title, a total loss conservatively amounting to £28 million a year, through the transmissions of games software over the air waves between British radio hams.

Approximately 50 software houses whose programs are involved include A&F, Anirog, Addictive, Bug-Byte, C.R.L., Melbourne House, Micromania, Ocean, Quicksilva, Silversoft, Vortex, Virgin, Imagine, DK Tronics and many others. Games readily available and free of charge include any major title you can think of. So far a total of 416 Spectrum games have been listed as being regularly transmitted between radio hams.

Dubious at first of their informant's claim about air wave piracy of software, A&F set up a monitoring station of their local area, and within one hour recorded off-air the transmission of software data for four well-known games. Convinced of the necessity for putting a stop to this activity, A&F have now instigated the setting up of a chain of monitoring stations around the country. As a result of their local station they are pursuing injunctions against approximately 30 people within a 50-mile radius.

The Department of Industry, which licences private radio hams, says that there are some 50,000 licensed operators in Britain. The terms of their licence strictly forbids the transmission of copyrighted material or any entertainment material. 'We are going to shut these people down,' says Mike. 'They think they are modern Robin Hoods, but they aren't.'

Mike is also well aware that some of the worst pirates are school teachers and school children, but the scale of radio piracy has made the software business aware that their very livelihoods depend on putting a stop to it as soon as possible. The argument often offered that if the price of software was lower then piracy would die out seems spurious, Mike thinks. 'The price per play of a game on a home computer has to be pence, compared with the 20p or more required for an arcade machine,' he says. He also points out that if piracy was stamped out then sales of games cassettes would rise by as much as ten times, which would immediately knock £1 to £2 off the current prices anyway.

Perhaps the only bright irony in the whole thing is that the biters are also getting bit; copycat programs which most magazines have allowed to be sold through classified ads in their pages are now also being 'pirated' and transmitted through the airwaves by radio hams! But then we've always known that there's no honour among thieves.

In common with a lot of other very committed software specialists, Mike Fitzgerald feels strongly that one of the saddest aspects of software piracy is that it is killing off not only a vital entertainment industry in its infancy, but, more important, also killing off an industry which is able to employ a great many young people who otherwise face a life on the dole. Unfortunately it seems that too many of the computer magazines who are where they are today because of the software industry are content to sit back and let it happen – they've made their money.

Software producer **Abacus** has told us that they have developed a cassette tape protection system for software. Three months ago, a similar idea developed by Jim Lamont was jumped on by the Ministry of Defence. Jim Lamont's system operated on the bias signal placed on any tape by a recording machine, but details of its operation are now top secret after MOD acted to seize all information relating to the copyright protection device he had designed.

Cathy Shaw of Abacus tells us that their system is nothing really new, merely an adaptation of something which is already in use, but which no one had thought of using in connection with preventing illegal copying of software from tape to tape. Abacus too have been jumped on by the MOD, which appears to be worried about any form of tape protection, but unlike Jim Lamont, Abacus seem confident that they will be cleared to go into production of the unit within six weeks. Cathy said that samples had been tested by several people who had tried to copy software programs which had been mastered using the protection system. While a copy was possible, it would not load properly or run, and the general impression was that this device really would work effectively.

Cathy Shaw, in common with many producers of games software, has campaigned for some time tomove the authorities into action against the pirates, and she is aware that the most serious threat to the British software industry comes from computing clubs and schools. In one instance she cites a teacher who has happily confessed to making an easy £500 a week from selling illegal tapes of games to his school children. If the British authorities in charge of schools are going to continue allowing this kind of freedom, one which often extends to the school copying educational programs for use in several classes to continue, then they deserve everything a work recession can throw at them.

In the end, only one thing really matters, and we must all ask ourselves the question very seriously. Do you want to see the home computer games market fade to nothing? If you have any interest in writing games programs you might want to market them – but what market will be left? It is time to wake up to the fact that every stolen copy of a game is damaging the very market that has given, and can continue to give, so much enjoyment for really very little cost.

Trashy Gossip

Flicking through the pages of a cynically up-market publication, whose name escapes me for the moment – *Personal Computer Games* I think it's called – I was fascinated to read a snippet of gossipy inconsequentiality which suggested that *CRASH* is a down-market magazine which cares nothing for objectivity. This because of an article on programmer **Steve Turner** written by **Andrew Hewson** (Turner's games are published by Hewson Consultants). This point *may* have had some validity had we *hidden* the writer's identity.

What's surprising about the piece in *Personal Computer Games* (April 1984) is that another computer title should obviously feel so threatened by **CRASH** as to resort to cheap smear tactics like this, and it wouldn't even rate a mention if those tactics were only confined to the scribblings of an unimportant hack. Unfortunately they have extended to advertisement executive of *PCG* spreading flasehoods in public, a matter I can't go into here, unfortunately.

It's all supposed to be jolly fun, I'm sure, with the writer jokingly forgetting the name of **CRASH** and substituting **TRASH** instead – after all, I could repeat a name I've heard on several lips which says that the initials *PCG* really stand for *Pukingly Cruddy Garbage* – but it doesn't really get our respective readers very far. As for down-market – at least **CRASH** attempts to offer readers what they want to know, whereas *PCG (Your Complete Guide to Micro Entertainment)* offers very little in the way of objective or detailed reviews and more resembles a cynical exercise in marketing (187 pages, 67 of editorial including program listings, compared to **CRASH**: 128 pages, 88 editorial).

PCG is losing its grip if it feels the need to sink to gutter press tactics like this against other magazines.

ROGER KEAN

ERRATUM

Due to some inexplicable error in typesetting, **Derek Brewster** was stated as the author of **MC Lothlorien's** *Micromouse Goes Debugging* in last months's issue. We apologise to all concerned. The author is in fact **Steve Hughes**.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

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A Crash Smash

It is unusual to have one software house releasing two really excellent games at the same time, but that is what *Software Projects* have just done. *Manic Miner*'s follow-up, *Jet Set Willy*, is obviously destined for the top of the charts, and its almost guaranteed success may well overshadow the second game, which would be a pity. So, congratulations to Software Projects.

Jet Set Willy

Producer: **Software Projects**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Matthew Smith**



Lives vanish in puffs of smoke at the Banyan tree.

There were rumours that *Matthew Smith* was a figment of the Liverpool computing mass psyche, or merely a clever code name for a Tandy computer. There were rumours that Matthew Smith didn't really exist, and that if he did, then *Jet Set Willy* didn't and wouldn't. So, after all the waiting, was it worth it? In fact, it's probably worth*less* even reviewing *Jet Set Willy*, since by the time you read this you will probably have already worked out the boots to cheat the game!

The rags-to-riches story is already well known. Rich from his sub-Surbiton mining exploits, Willy has bought a huge mansion with over 60 rooms, most of which he has never seen. There's been a mammoth party and the guests have left the place in a dreadful mess. Willy just wants to go to bed, but his housekeeper, the nighmarish Martha, won't let him until every bit and piece has been picked up and tidied away.

It is always difficult to do a sequel to a best-seller. Not only should it have the same style, it should be bigger and better. *Jet Set Willy* seems to score on all counts. Very sensibly, it is actually a very different game to *Manic Miner*, much more of an adventure in which the player can move freely between the linking rooms and work out the structure of Willy's strange house. In keeping with a good adventure, there are some random elements that have been thrown in. In some rooms the hazards may change places, or disappear altogether. Some rooms may not be entered from a particular direction – you lose all your lives, and sometimes that does not happen. In all respects, the creation of all the rooms is exceptional, each with its own peculiarities. Some of them are very hard to solve.

Software Projects have included a complex colour code with the inlay, which must be looked after at all costs, since the game will not run without a correct code entry after loading is completed.

CRITICISM

'I consider this game not as a follow-up to *Manic Miner*, but as something quite different. It has a totally different game structure, more interesting graphics – like the swinging ropes that are highly realistic, hobbing rabbits, deadly razor blades, wobbling jellies and endless other inventions. Not a single graphic has been taken from *Manic Miner*, with the exception of Willy himself, now in a natty hat rather than his mining gear. Quite simply, the sound is excellent, the graphics are brill and the colour is great. A classic.'

'If Manic Miner *was maddening, frustrating and fun, then* Jet Set Willy *should certainly be put on the Government's list of proscribed drugs. The cynical manner in which you are given so many lives to play with is just typical of the extraordinary talent of* Matthew Smith *– mean through and through! I thought, well with so many lives it must be easy to get a long way. Yet they just disappear before your very eyes. The detail of the graphics is marvellous. The dreadful Maria with her pointing hand of accusation, the flickering candles, the grinning heads, the leaping security guards, just everything has been worked as far as it can go. If there's no demo in this game, it is because it would spoil the*



fun of exploring the huge mansion, and besides, I doubt whether there's a nibble left in the memory, let alone a spare byte before tea. Now I must get back to The Banyan Tree and try again for the tenth damned time in a row to get through. . . .'

'*Jet Set Willy* is a high point in the development of the Spectrum game. I hope there will be others, maybe ones of a different kind, but I'm sure nothing will top this game for addictivity, fluent graphics, responsiveness and sheer imagination. The nightmare quality of the events suggests its author should be receiving therapy. Instead, he's probably getting rich. Good luck to him . . .'

COMMENTS

Control keys: alternate keys row Q to P left/right. SHIFT to SPACE for jump
Joystick: pointless having one, keyboard is much better
Keyboard play: highly responsive, but watch the tight spots, which have been purposely made as finicky as possible
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: perfect
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: how nimble are your fingers?
Lives: 8
General rating: to date, one of the most addictive and finest Spectrum games.

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	96%
Playability	94%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	98%
Value for money	99%
Overall	**95%**

Tribble Trouble

Producer: **Software Projects**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Jim Scarlett**

Jim Scarlett wrote the very good *Doombugs*, which was published by **Workforce** and seems to have been rather underrated. That was an original but fairly simple game to play. *Tribble Trouble* is a highly original game and a very difficult one to play.

For those who remember the *Star Trek* series, it may be possible to recollect an episode called 'The Trouble With Tribbles.' Tribbles were cuddly, cute but rather troublesome creatures that began multiplying on board the Enterprise until they posed a serious threat to the ship. In this new game they are still cute and cuddly and even more of a menace. The hero of the piece is Brian Skywalker (yes, Luke's little known brother), and he's a Tribble Farmer on the planet Noom. When on a mission to round up wild tribbles, his Noomrover runs out of fuel and Brian is forced to herd his tribble back to base on foot.

This trek takes him and his tribblesome herd through five sheets of sheer hell. In the first, Brian is stranded near his Noomrover at the foot of Firebug Mountain, beside a river which he must cross. Gems sparkle occasionally, and then he can dash up and dig out a rock, nudge it into position and fling it into the river. The first stones sink down, so he has to make two lines of three rocks on the bottom, and then another two rows of three on top. When this is done, it will be possible to take a tribble across to the next screen. The problems, however, are soon manifest. Tribblesome trouble starts when the tribble, never content to stay in one place, start to emerge from the Noomrover. The Firebugs that live on the Mountain like eating tribbles, so they start to move in. Tribbles also run straight at the nearest water and drown. Fortunately, they are fairly obedient-*ish*, and will follow Brian if he's near. This lets him lead them up and pop them back into the top of the Noomrover.

In sheet two, The Goofer Desert, the tribbles eat goofers but are killed by cacti, and Brian sometimes gets caught up too. Then there's the Spheroids' cave. Spheroids, too, like tribbles, and in the Snappers' Lair, the Snappers like tribbles, while the tribbles run off everywhere after the mushrooms. In the last screen you must get all the escaped tribbles back into their pen before the air runs out. In fact the only 'good' thing about this game is thaat for once you can play the part of a hero who is practically indestructible!

CRITICISM

'Keeping tribbles out of trouble is a very difficult task, as they seem to enjoy exploring a great deal, unaware of what hazards are around them, or what Brian is doing. All the figures in this game are detailed and very well animated. Every screen is colourful and enjoyable to play – which doesn't mean the game is easy; in fact it is difficult and will take ages to get through. The tunes are excellent as well. It's a MUST BUY!!'

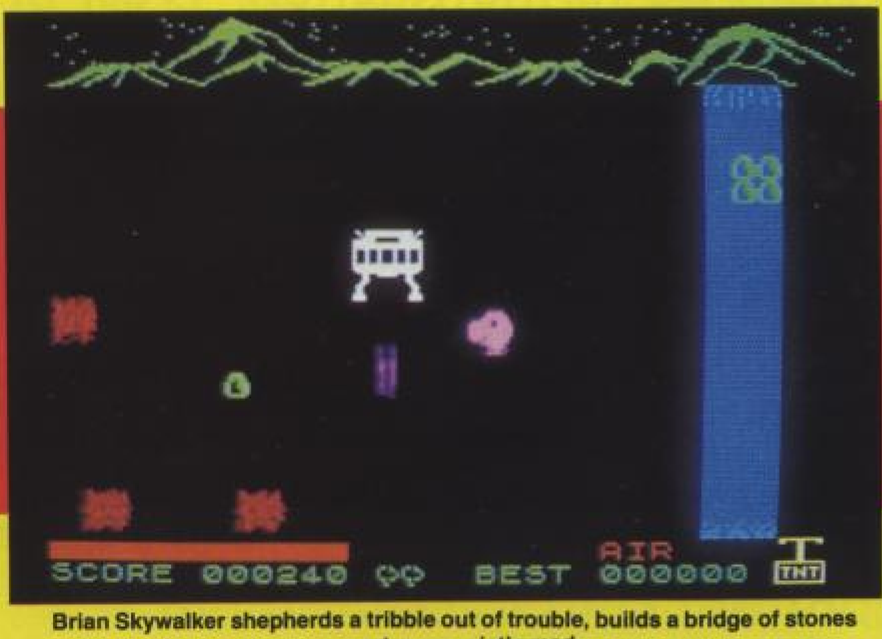
'Brian Skywalker stands every chance of becoming a Spectrum hero. He is simple in shape, nicely drawn and immediately likeable, like Miner Willy or Horace. The trible, though much tinier, are also beautifully drawn and animated, and look suspiciously like mini Brians. On the first screen, keeping an eye out for the brief twinkle which denotes a gem to be dug for, whilst keeping the next emerging tribble out of trouble, takes all your concentration. when a gem is dug, a rock pops up somewhere else that may be nuged into the river. All the movements in the game are delightfully done, and the pixel movement graphics are first-rate throughout. Compelling and enjoyable.'

'I had to break off to get the review done, but there are still three screens to fight through before this game is conquered, and even then I will have to go back. All I can say is if tribble farming is this much trouble, I think I'll stay here and play computer games! Excellent sound, colour and graphics, an excellent game and very unusual too.'

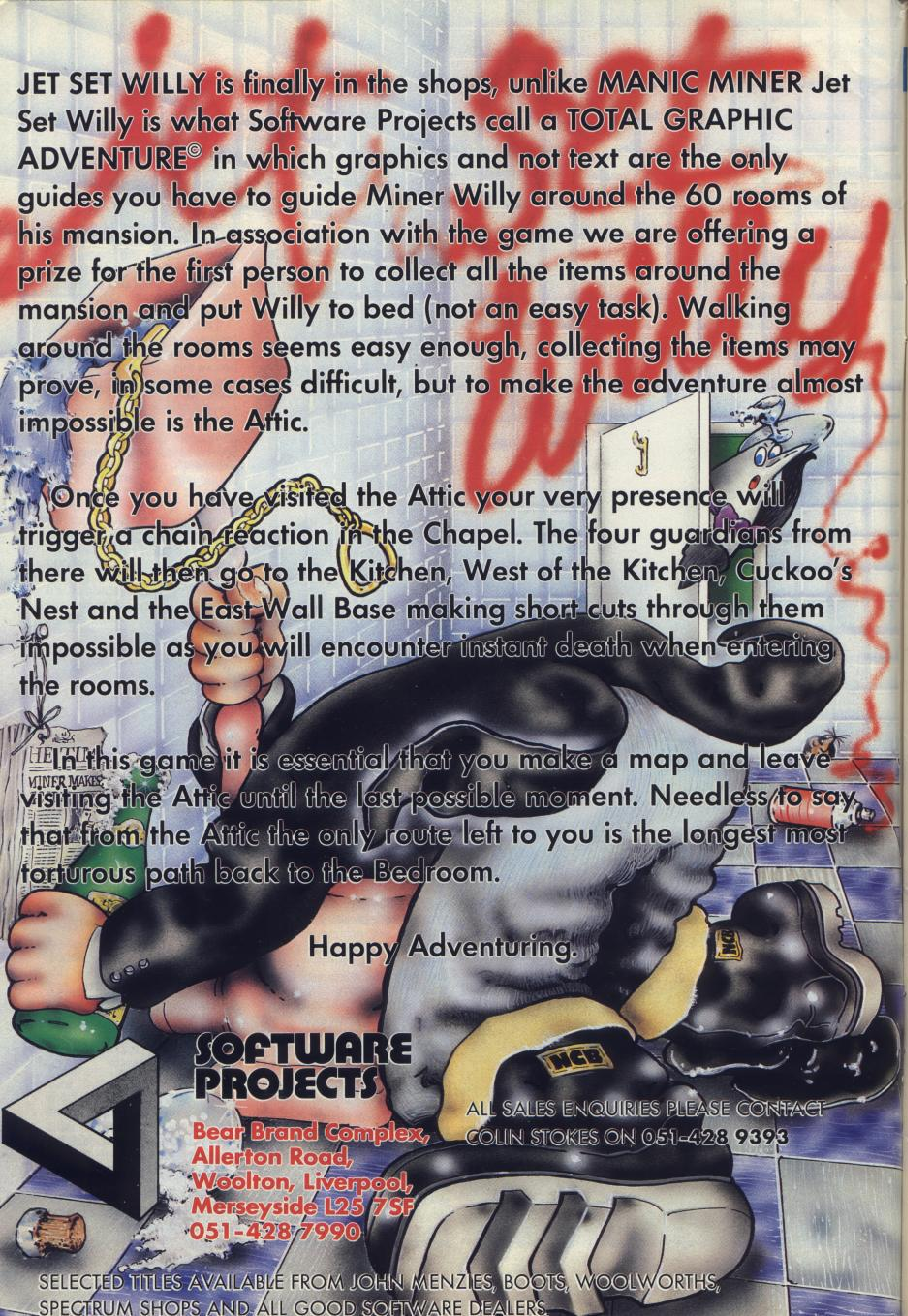
COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/Z up/down, I/P left/right and zero to 'dig'
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: good, very responsive
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: ultra-smooth, detailed and very fast
Sound: excellent, great tunes
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 5
General rating: excellent, highly recommended.

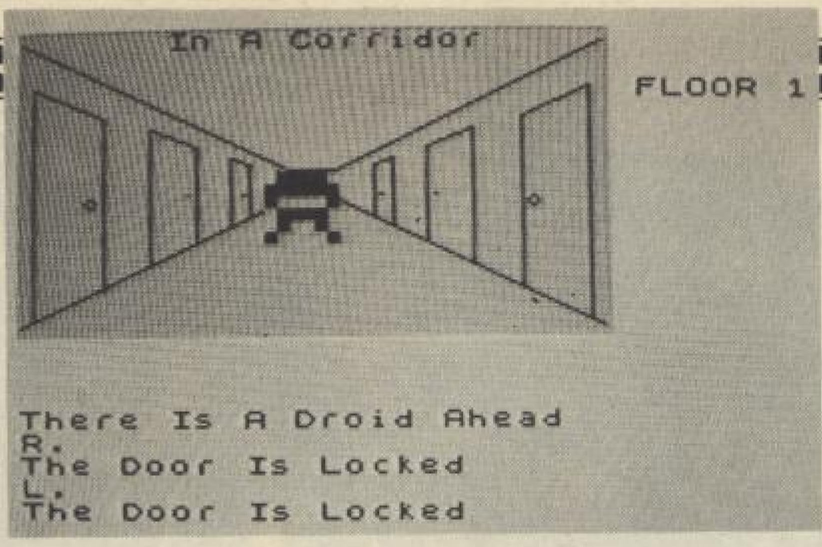
Use of computer	89%
Graphics	91%
Playability	92%
Getting started	86%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	92%
Overall	**91%**



Brian Skywalker shepherds a tribble out of trouble, builds a bridge of stones and goes quietly mad.



Jet Set Willy
JET SET WILLY is finally in the shops, unlike MANIC MINER Jet Set Willy is what Software Projects call a TOTAL GRAPHIC ADVENTURE© in which graphics and not text are the only guides you have to guide Miner Willy around the 60 rooms of his mansion. In association with the game we are offering a prize for the first person to collect all the items around the mansion and put Willy to bed (not an easy task). Walking around the rooms seems easy enough, collecting the items may prove, in some cases difficult, but to make the adventure almost impossible is the Attic.
Once you have visited the Attic your very presence will trigger a chain reaction in the Chapel. The four guardians from there will then go to the Kitchen, West of the Kitchen, Cuckoo's Nest and the East Wall Base making short cuts through them impossible as you will encounter instant death when entering the rooms.
In this game it is essential that you make a map and leave visiting the Attic until the last possible moment. Needless to say that from the Attic the only route left to you is the longest most torturous path back to the Bedroom.
Happy Adventuring.
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Mission 1 (Project Volcano)

Producer: **Mission Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **BASIC**
Author: **Stuart Peart**

Fancy yourself a top-notch secret agent, well versed in the arts of self-defence and investigative intuition? Then *Mission 1*, an adventure that seems to be the first in a series of missions from this new company, might appeal.

The package is presented in a novel way. The cassette is glued to an ominous manilla envelope which contains a passport, briefing sheet, brief outline map (top secret) and useful hints including a previous agent's last message from inside a top secret enemy missile command centre. It is now your task to penetrate this installation. Once inside, you must locate the main computer room and nobble it by entering a destruct code to be found somewhere in the complex.

Once started, the adventure follows the standard graphics adventure formula with a picture of the location on top of the screen and the text beneath. Type in HELP and you get a list of 11 basic command words and their understood abbreviations. In keeping with most long adventures, it has a SAVE routine.

You enter the complex through a ventilation shaft, and if you're clever enough to get past watery and electrical hurdles, you find yourself on the first floor of the command centre, a set of corridors with rooms off. The search for the code can now commence.

CRITICISM

'*Mission 1* is a fairly standard adventure. I thought the graphics rather basic, lacking detail, and they made the wait for them to build up a bit boring. Unfortunately the text descriptions were no more atmospheric either. Response to input is slow due to the BASIC, and very limited in its understanding of words. Not exactly a James Bond Mission.'

'A neat adventure for beginners I would think, though lacking in excitement and things to do. Because of this, when you meet with the immoveable difficulty of entering a lift to the second floor you might very well give up rather quickly.'

'A slightly overpriced adventure for what you get. It's a pity the software doesn't quite match the excellence of the packaging and accessories. More options on how to complete the obstacle course and more atmosphere would have helped. But I did find it oddly compelling in a frustrating way. It's very simplicity made the biggest difficulty I encountered seem even more difficult to solve when the answer must have been so obvious. I couldn't help liking it and feeling friendly towards it despite its shortcomings. Enough, anyway, to look forward to their next *Mission* in the hope that it's a bit more developed on the text and action.'

COMMENTS

Response: fairly slow
Graphics: generally line over coloured background
Features: excellent packaging simulating a dossier for secret agents
General rating: an excellent idea spoiled to some extent by the actual program.

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	40%
Playability	55%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	60%
Overall	**58%**

Sheer Panic

Producer: **Visions**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Kevin Bezant**

This game deserves a few percentage points in its favour just for the inlay cover design, possibly the most vivid and accurate description of a 'Panic' game ever seen!

Sheer Panic is a conventional 'Panic' with five floors, the bottom one of which is undiggable. Your man carries a very long shovel with which to dig his holes into which, hopefully, the three monsters encountered on the first screen will fall. As is customary, monsters getting out of holes turn another colour and then have to be knocked through two holes, or even three holes in a row. The game is played out against a background of falling oxygen. Between lives as well as games, the layout of the ladders is changed.

CRITICISM

'The game seems to lose its addictivity after a couple of hours playing, probably because there's no change in the idea. Also, the keys are very inconvenient, so a joystick might be better. Fair graphics on the platforms and ladders, but the aliens aren't so good.'

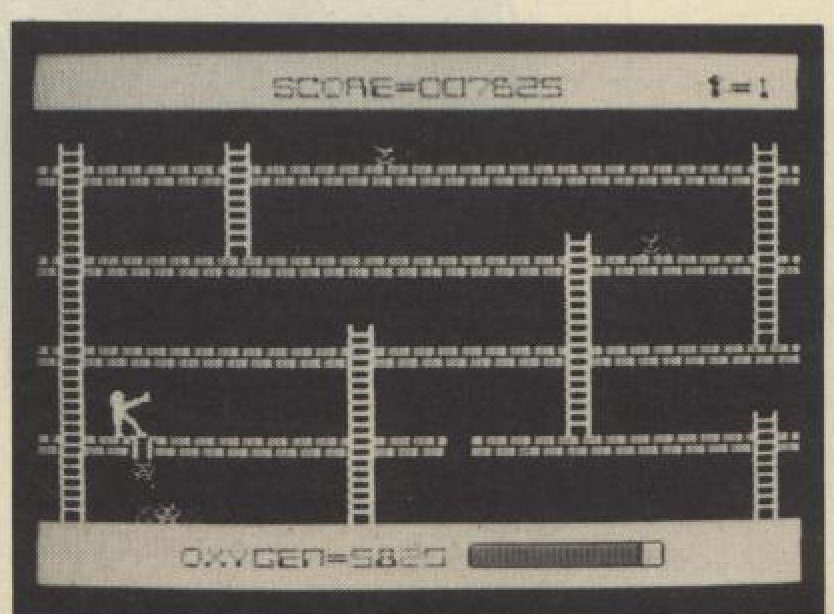
'This is a fairly typical version of 'Panic.' The graphics are very simple and the game is unexciting – not a patch on the original. Basically, I did not like it.'

There are quite a few versions of 'Panic' now for the Spectrum, but none match up the quality of this one. The keyboard is very responsive, there is a good use of colour and the graphics are fast, smooth and the sound is great. The monsters are incremented by two with each screen successfully completed. All I can say is that this is the best 'Panic' for the Spectrum with all the features of the arcade original. A very active game.'

COMMENTS

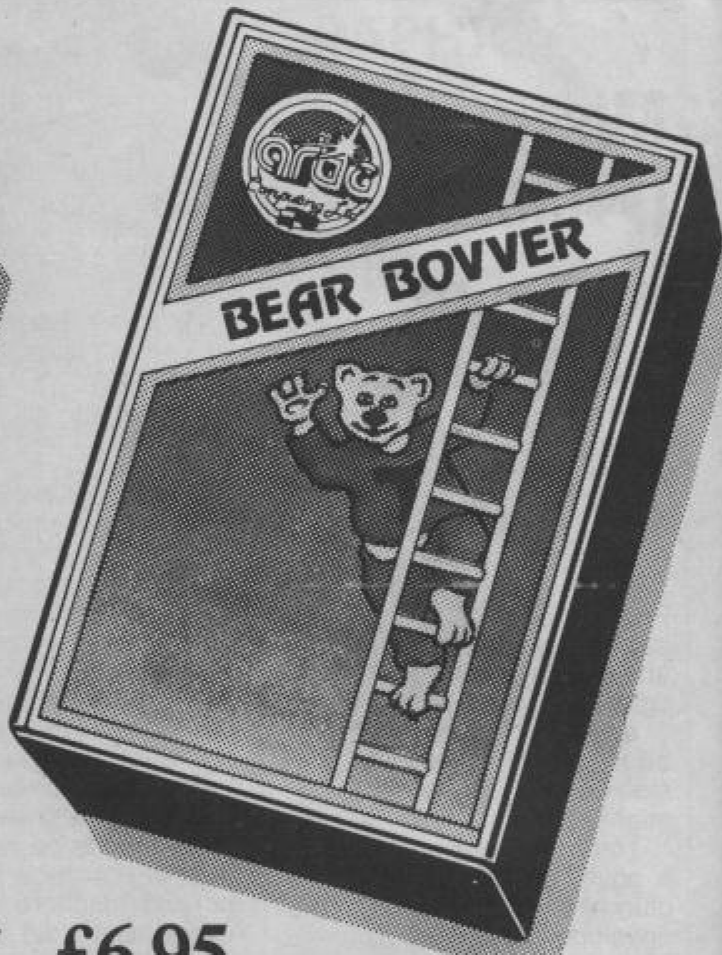
Control keys: 6/7 left/right, 8/9 up/down
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive, but Sinclair keys are not the best arrangement
Use of colour: good
Graphics: fair to good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: above average

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	60%
Playability	68%
Getting started	64%
Addictive qualities	60%
Value for money	65%
Overall	**63%**





Jet Set Willy **£5.95**

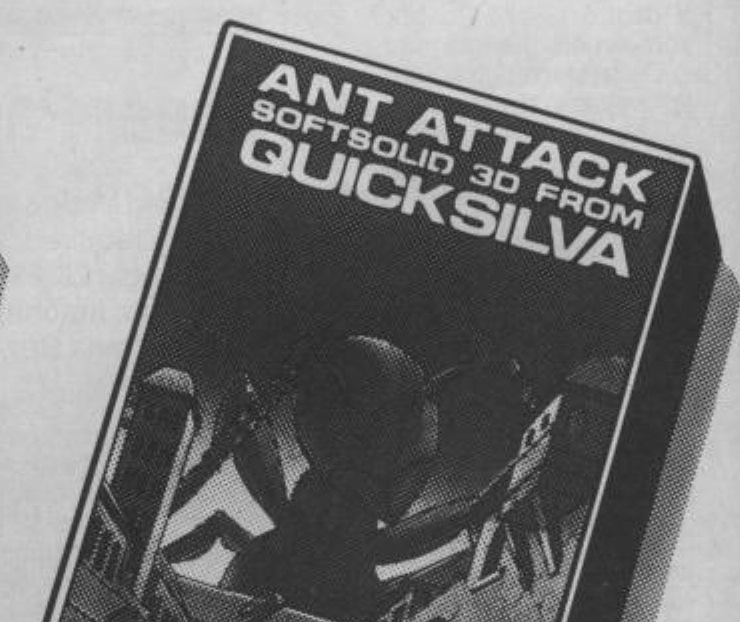


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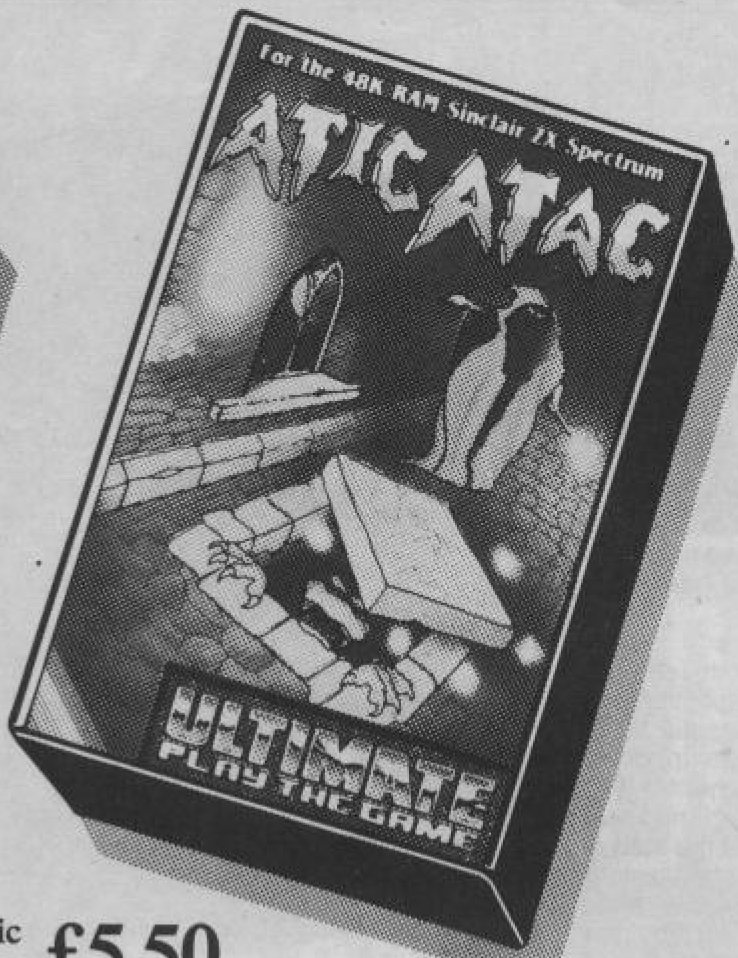
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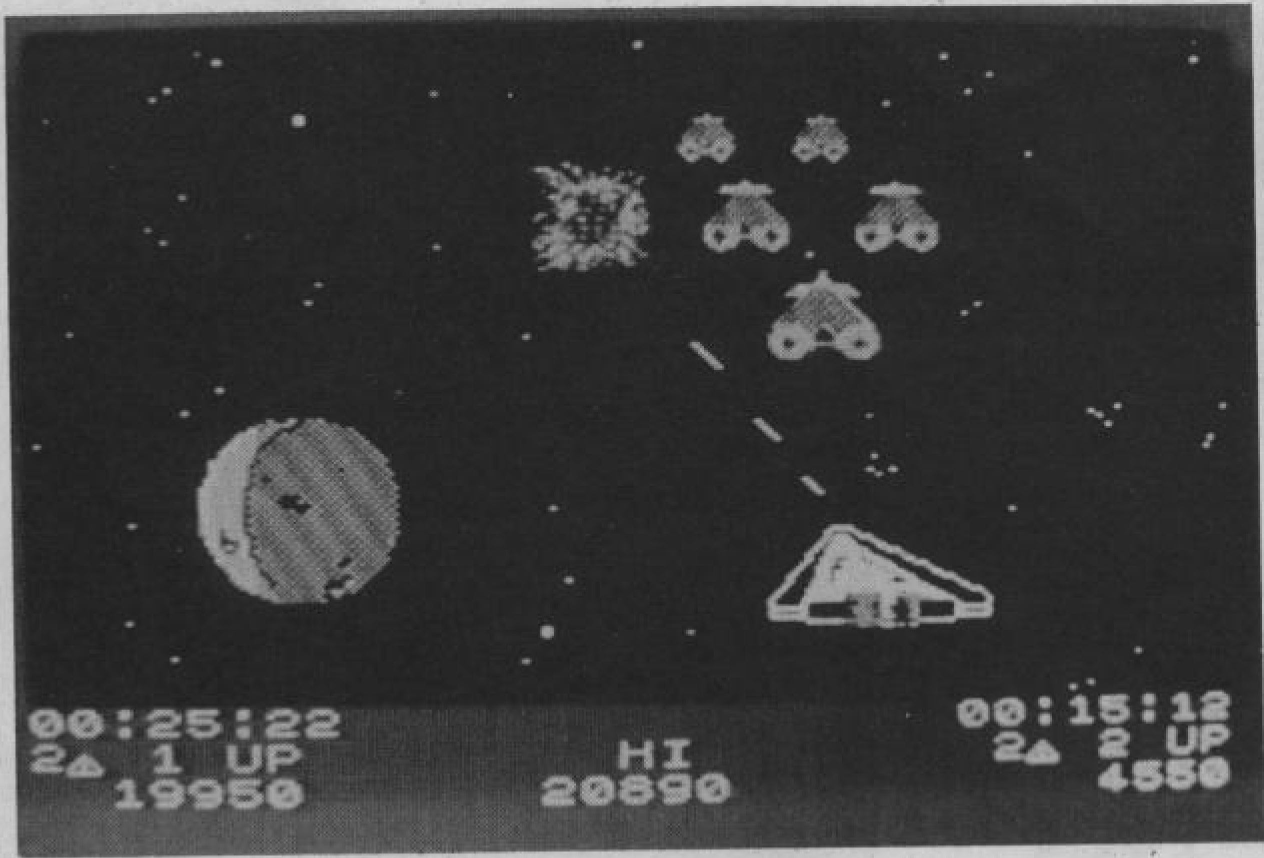
In fact, for the full spectrum, you can't do better than come to the people who know the game.

WHSMITH

Subject to availability. Prices correct at time of going to press. At selected branches only

Ad Astra

Producer: **Gargoyle Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Authors: **Roy Carter, Greg Follis**



3 Dee-er than 3D, fully animated shoot em up in *Ad Astra*.

Gargoyle Games is a new company situated in Birmingham, and *Ad Astra* (To the Stars!) is their first game. It's quite a debut too.

This is an arcade space combat game which features very large graphics, all depicted in a very solid three dimensions with perspective. There are 20 segments, with each segment being made up of seven phases. At the start of each phase and after a lost life, large planetoid-shaped asteroids hurtle from the depths of space at the player's ship. These cannot be shot, but must be dodged. As the last of these is vanishing under your ship (hopefully), alien craft appear as dots in the distance and then swoop down on you firing bolts. Five different types of aliens attack in eight different formations, firing two types of laser bolts at you.

This is followed by a large mine layer, which crosses the screen, loosing streams of rotating mines. These should be blown up as soon as possible because if they blow up themselves they fire off bolts at you, which come across the screen, making two directions filled with flying weaponry. Then come the spinning saucers, also firing at you. These need to be hit several times before they really blow up.

The last phase is a Way Station. Before the sixth phase starts, a security code appears for the next Way Station, and as the station appears, the player must input the correct code. An incorrect entry results in loss of a life. A correct entry results in a welcome message and an extra life.

The screen display is full of different coloured stars. Your ship is a large V-shaped craft, which is able to move all over the screen, and is equipped with rapid fire laser bolts.

CRITICISM

'The first thing to hit you in the eye with this game is the stunning graphics. The 3D effect is quite strong, especially on the asteroids, which not only come from the distance to sweep hugely past you, but are shaded as well. The rapid fire from your ship makes a fireworks display if you fire and move rapidly about the screen. The graphics move very smoothly and very fast, which is just as well, because all the craft, yours and the aliens, are very big. Dodging planetoids, aliens and laser bolts can be done using the perspective. You can nip upwards and sail over the top of something. This all takes quite a bit of practice. With its superb graphics, speed and mass of alien weaponry, *Ad Astra* is a difficult and addictive game to play.'

'The 3D graphics are extremely well detailed – the moons especially so, with shading, craters and even a rotational effect as they roll towards you. Your ship is very manouvrable and fires really well. The explosions are particularly good: large, detailed and effective. They reminded me of cartoon film animation. It's addictive because you want to get through the next stage to see what they will throw at you next.'



'The rotating moons move towards you at increasing speeds depending on what stage you have reached in the game. These are very well animated. Aliens appear in the distance and zoom in on you, but not very smoothly, as they basically go through two stages, dots, then full sized, moving down the screen. On the second screen, however, the yellow rotating aliens move very well towards you. Moving on to the third screen, the graphics are slightly more basic; the large minelayers are quite simple, though nicely drawn, but the rotating mines work well. Exceptionally addictive at first, but after a couple of hours play this wears off.'

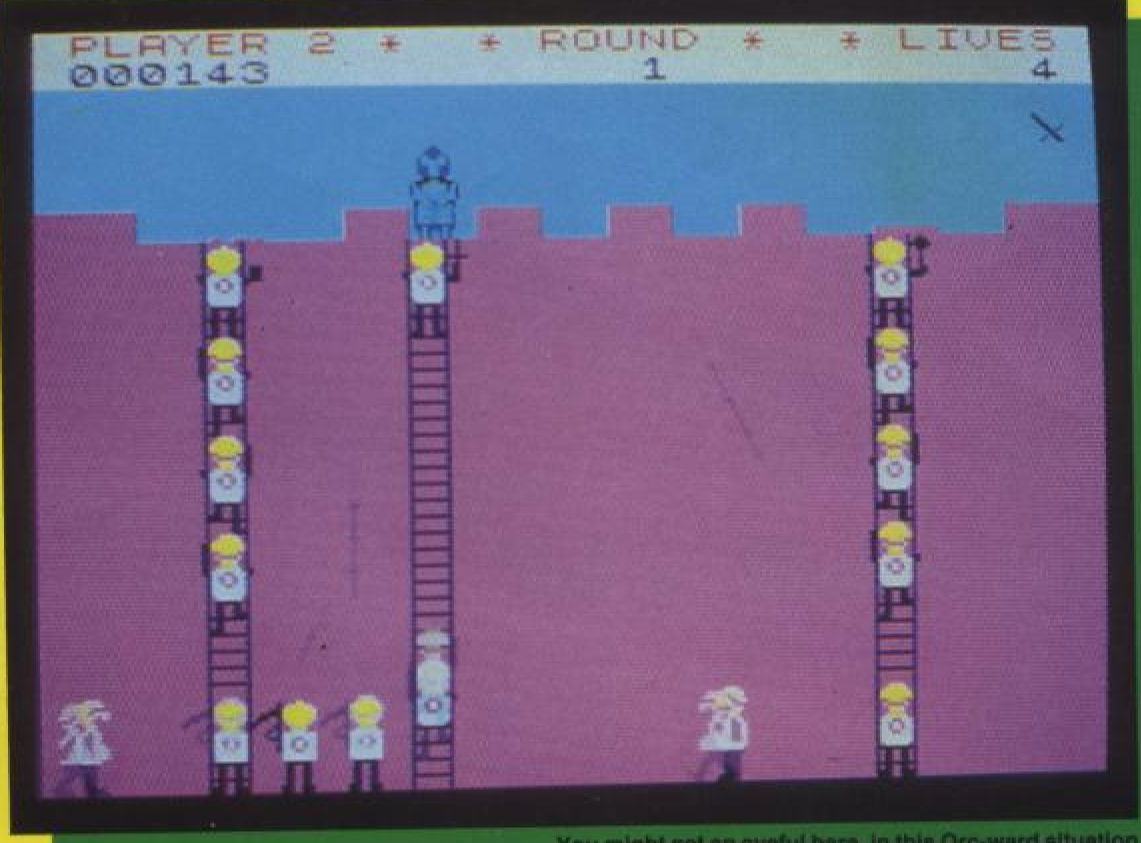
COMMENTS

Control keys: Alternate keys bottom row left/right, second row=down, thid row=up, four corner keys will fire, alternatively the cursors may be used
Joystick: Kempston, ZX 2, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: generally excellent, with effective sense of perspective
Sound: average
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 6
Features: one- or two-player games
General rating: addictive, attractive graphics and very playable.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	80%
Playability	84%
Getting started	79%
Addictive qualities	75%
Value for money	78%
Overall	**80%**


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A Crash Smash



You might get an eyeful here, in this Orc-ward situation.

Orc Attack

Producer: **Creative Sparks**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Phil Snell and Dean Lock**

This new release for **Thorn EMI** under their new imprint, **Creative Sparks**, is a clever reworking of the 'Siege' theme. The fearsome army of Orcs besieging your castle, are now mounting a frontal attack. Your weapons are rocks, swords and boiling oil. The screen shows the walls of the castle with its battlements and you at the top. In either top corner is a symbol identifying the type of weapon available, and to the corners you go the collect them. In the first stage a large force of orcs start mounting ladders to climb up and you may hurl rocks down at them. These must be thrown between the battlements, so it is made difficult by the fact that the ladders are often placed in a position where you can't throw rocks down, easily.

As soon as the ladders are erected the orcs start climbing. Others at the base of the wall fire cross bow bolts at you. When an orc reaches the top, your weapon automatically changes to a sword and you can swipe away at them. The orcs hammer at the battlements, eroding them. If you are hit (in the eye), you lose a life and have to get another weapon. These are not unlimited. Boiling oil (when it's ready) may be poured down on the attackers, causing a conflagration that destroys them all.

When this is done, the evil sorcerer sends his spells up the wall, and these skull shaped things may be bombed by rocks. This returns you to another orc and ladder attack. Surviving this will lead to an attack by giant trolls who appear in thin air, and then come the Stone Warts, who again try to scale the wall under your hail of rocks.

CRITICISM

'At first glance, *Orc Attack* looks a bit simple – how wrong can you be! The animated detail is amazing. As they march on, the army of Orcs are all doing different things, loading cross bows, firing, building ladders, climbing them and so on. There can be as many as fifteen at a go, all trying to get you. 'You' are nicely animated too, and an arrow in the eye is really painful. Orc Attack is really quite original, and owes nothing to any game I've ever seen. It's very playable, very addictive and well made. I would definitely recommend it.'

'Fantastic – that's all!

'Another unique game from Thorn EMI with some fantastic animation. At first impression it didn't seem very addictive or very playable, but it turns out to be quite the opposite. The game is very fast and busy. Excellent graphics and use of colour. I can guarantee you'll get some laughs out of this game. Highly recommended by me!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 left/right, Ø to fire
Joystick: ZX 2, Fuller, AGF, Kempston, Protek
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Screens: 4
Lives: 9 (you need em)
General rating: Original, addictive, highly recommended.

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	90%
Getting started	92%
Playability	95%
Addictive qualities	96%
Value for money	82%
Overall	**91%**

3D Lunattack

Producer: **Hewson Consultants**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Steve Turner**

The latest in **Hewson's** attempts to convince an ignorant world that life as we know it will soon cease to exist unless we turn our attention to the threat of the SEIDDAB, is also the best yet. The ideas author **Steve Turner** started to develop in **3D Space Wars**, improved in **3D Seiddab Attack**, have now come to full fruition in this latest program (unless he's got more ideas stuffed up his sleeve).

The game requires you to fly a mission in your Z5 Luna Hover Fighter against the Seiddab command base. This is protected by three rings of defense. The first consists of robotically controlled DAB tanks which fire missiles at your craft and they can be destroyed by laser fire. The second ring is a mountainous area seeded with aerial mines, set to explode in your proximity. These may be shot with your lasers, or dodged around. An exploding mine will rock your craft and deflect its course. The third zone is studded with self activating SEIDDAB missile silos, which may be attacked with your lasers. If you penetrate the command zone, many straffing runs will be required to destroy the base while avoiding its heavy defensive fore power.

At any time you may be attacked by Seiddab hover fighters. Your craft is also armed with air-to-air missiles which will destroy the enemy fighters before they come into range, although when they are sighted the lasers must be used. Weapon selection is automatic, below the horizon it's lasers, above it's missiles.

The complex screen display is a cockpit view, not unlike that in *Seiddab Attack.* Out of the cockpit windshield you can see the horizon of mountains, the various details of the enemy craft in solid 3D, the crosswire sight of your weaponry and the illuminated radar display. This switches on automatically an enemy hover fighter is detected. It places a small box near the enemy location and a set of decreasing figures showing range to sighting. At this stage missiles may be fired and forgotten. Below the viewscreen is the instrumentation showing fuel, armament type in use and hull temperature, which increases to a critical point with each enemy strike. A message display informs you of the zone entered and enemy activity. This is also given verbally if you are using the **Currah Microspeech** unit.

O·R·C A·T·T·A·C·K 3·D L·U·N·A·T·T·A·C·K



Racing across the surface of the moon towards the Seiddab Command Base.

As yours is a hover craft, the left/right keys alter direction, but the up/down keys raise and lower the weapon sight.

An additional treat is the recording on tape immediately after loading. To hear this you simply unplug the EAR socket on the recorder and sit back. Alternatively for those with Currah, just turn up the telly volume and listen to the instructions on playing the game as related by the mission commander to 'you'.

CRITICISM

'Steve Turner has managed to pack an amazing amount of program and game into this. The display is wonderful, the best three dimensional "Battle Zone" type game yet. It is seen at its best when a missile takes off from the ground silos, and can literally dash past your windscreen, as it turns in its trajectory to head straight at you. Neat touches like the radar warning display "projected" up onto the windshield canopy are marvellous. Also useful is the navigation system. Placing the gun sight at it lowest position prompts a series of short straight lines to appear, which guide you into command base. This is essential when you are on your final straffing runs, as several are needed, making you constantly circle the base for another go. Really excellent, most playable and addictive too.'

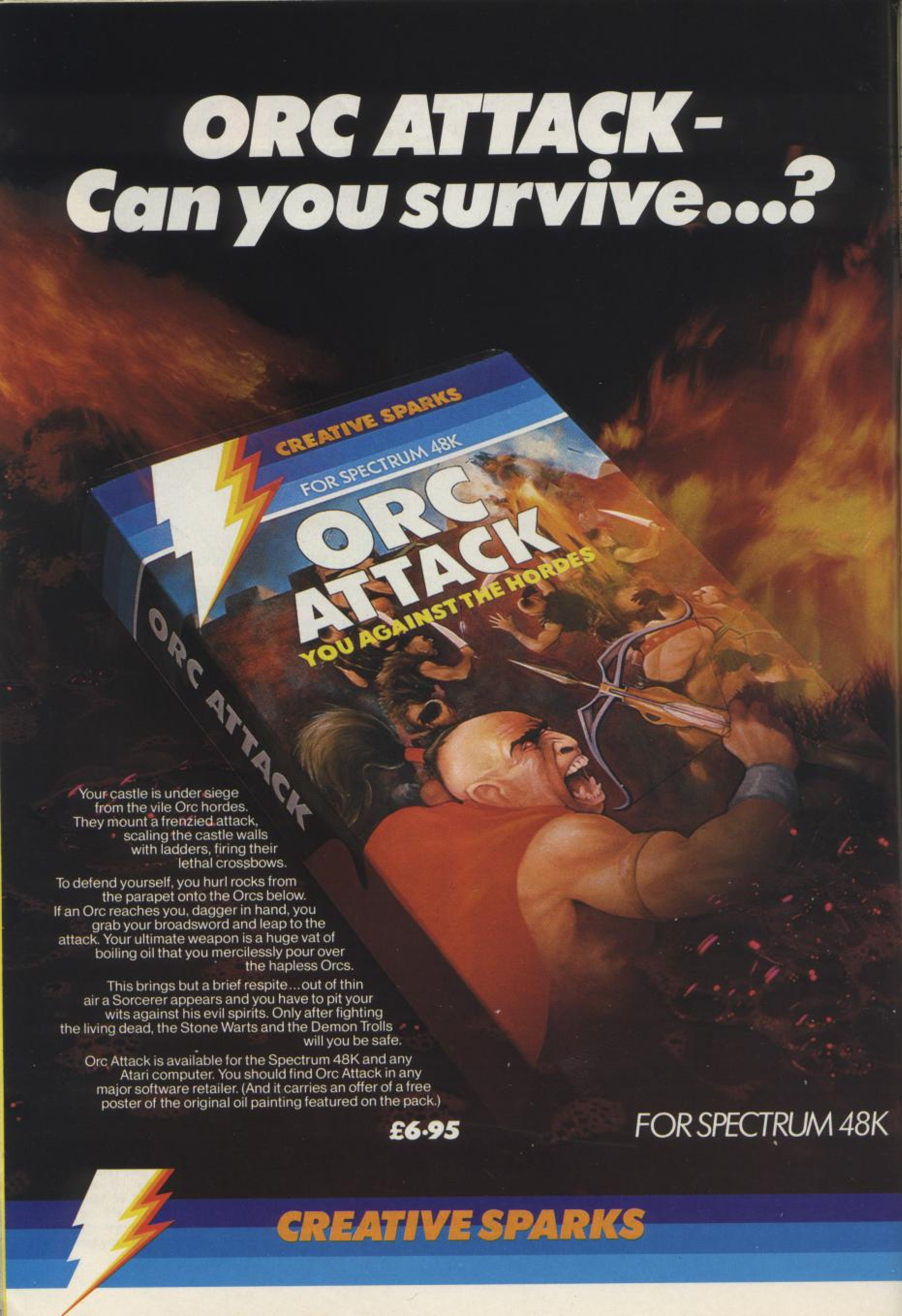
'You fight the battle against the Seiddab again, but don't form any opinion from 3D Seiddab Attack, *for this is totally different and utterly amazing! Three dimensional graphics storm towards you at a terrific speed, and it's all so realistic. Your hover craft handles just like a real fighter would – I think. Skill and accuracy play a major role in this shoot em up game. The Spectrum seems to have been pushed to its limits, although Steve Turner will no doubt have a go at pushing them further still on the next one. Graphics are fast, smooth and detailed, and although colour has been well used, it doesn't have a major function. No unnecessary instrumentation has been put in, it's all essential to help you win. It's highly addictive and I think it will take a long time to get tired of.'*

'All the detail in this game is excellent. As your craft turns the horizon sways to match the banking effect. When your hull overheats, the screen turns blood red, then the nose of your craft dips, and the ground seems to rush up to meet you. The graphics throughout are fast and very smooth, well used 3D effects, especially the ground missiles. Even the half sphere of the Earth can be seen hovering just above the mountainous horizon as you head for the command centre. The cursor keys may not be in the best layout, but surprisingly, they seem to work quite well here, despite the speed of play, possibly because one set operates direction, the other set the sight. The sound is also very well used, and powerful if you have a Currah unit. I could almost swear the 'you' on the recording at the start is Sean Connery playing his James Bond role. 'Marvellous.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors, with Ø to fire
Joystick: Kempston, Datel ZX 2, Protek, AGF
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: excellent, fast, smooth and detailed 3D
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1 but completing mission results in an increase in difficulty
Lives: 3
Features: special sound recording on tape, 1 or 2-player games, Currah Microspeech compatible
General rating: Highly addictive, complex shoot em up. Excellent value and highly recommended.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	92%
Playability	89%
Getting started	95%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	92%
Overall	**90%**



ORC ATTACK-
Can you survive...?
CREATIVE SPARKS
FOR SPECTRUM 48K
ORC ATTACK
YOU AGAINST THE HORDES
ORC ATTACK
Your castle is under siege from the vile Orc hordes. They mount a frenzied attack, scaling the castle walls with ladders, firing their lethal crossbows.
To defend yourself, you hurl rocks from the parapet onto the Orcs below. If an Orc reaches you, dagger in hand, you grab your broadsword and leap to the attack. Your ultimate weapon is a huge vat of boiling oil that you mercilessly pour over the hapless Orcs.
This brings but a brief respite... out of thin air a Sorcerer appears and you have to pit your wits against his evil spirits. Only after fighting the living dead, the Stone Warts and the Demon Trolls will you be safe.
Orc Attack is available for the Spectrum 48K and any Atari computer. You should find Orc Attack in any major software retailer. (And it carries an offer of a free poster of the original oil painting featured on the pack.)
£6·95
FOR SPECTRUM 48K
CREATIVE SPARKS



LETTERS

Each month I'll be choosing the best letter from the postbag, and, as well as publishing it, ***I'll send the writer £12 worth of software*** *of his or her choice (it can be two cassettes as long as they come within the £12). I've had to grovel on bended knee to the editor for this, so you'd better be grateful!*
Send your letters to ***Lloyd Mangram, CRASH Forum, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*** *I can't promise to print everything that comes in because space is precious (I'm told) but I'll do my best.*

Once again we've received a massive mailbag of letters – far too many to be able to print even a fraction. However, to get in as many readers' comments as possible, I've been through loads of letters and taken fragments here and there. Don't forget, we give a prize of £12 worth of software to the writer with the best letter each month. This month there are two letters which I considered worthy of calling 'best' letters. As you may imagine, this has caused severe consternation in the finance department, not to mention my Editor having a fit. *'Two letters getting a prize!'* he exclaimed. As you all know, I'm not one to cringe before editorial wrath, and I stuck to my guns. Fortunately he never reads the magazine, so he'll (hopefully) never notice that the first letter isn't all that complimentary . . .

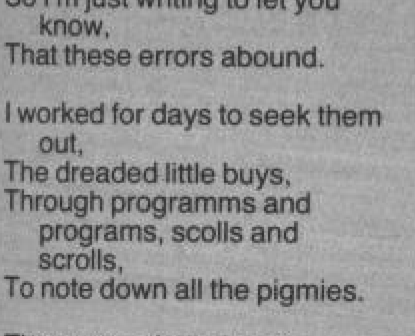
ODE TO A SPEELING BUG

While reading through you
software guide,
I became repeatedly aware,
Of many luny speeling
mistakes
Which are dotted here and
there.

It starts to be annoying,
I was stomping up and down,
So I'm just writing to let you
know,
That these errors abound.

I worked for days to seek them
out,
The dreaded little buys,
Through programms and
programs, scolls and
scrolls,
To note down all the pigmies.

There were tiems it got
hypnotic,
A nd I nearly did collapse,
You must be talking pirateese,
Talked by the priate chaps.



One time I almot lot congrol,
For I was getting nowehre,
The drawbacks were
enormous,
As my face turned magneta.

But finally I reached the end,
And saw realtiy,
But time files, and it was
atainst me,
I had to hurry.

Am I being unconventinal
In writing this little ditty,
I wanted to be cinematic,
and write diagrmatically.

So then I sought my ababcus,
And other mathematical
instrumetns,
to find out aboutkyour exra
bonus,
For expecially locquacious
letters.

Is your magazine salvagable?
Or being anihilated?
Only you can chose, you're in
the basting position,
Is hy-oh Quicsilva away
outdated?

With complements, Mark Harvey (aged 13), Tadcaster, N. Yorks. Reference CRASH No 2 (March)

My spelling was never much to write home with, Mark, but even I know that you spell compliments with an 'i' and not an 'e.' Still, just to prove that grovelling doesn't always pay, that £12 worth of software on its way to Mark – don't call us, we'll call you.

BUY A COMPUTER

Dear Sir,
I am writing to say how much I enjoyed the first issue of CRASH. I think it is very important to read reviews before buying games and to print a picture of the display is an added bonus as it gives a better idea of the game than reading the inlay, which is not always truthful.

I hope in future issues you print a HELP page for Adventure feaks like myself. In the past year I have been transformed from a cabbage-brained housewife to a logically thinking mind-blowing Adventure maniac! I have finished four of the five Artic adventure series and am only two weeks into the fifth. I have also played *Invincible Island, Urban Upstart* and *Mountains of Ket*, all of which I would give high ratings, especially *Mountains of Ket*, which is the only one to get me stumped (I scored 99% but could not get past a Zombie in the end – any help on this would be appreciated!

My only other suggestion for your magazine would be a pge for young users, as in my experience there is very little to interest the very young. My own two girls (nine and seven) are both eager to input programs from magazines but usually find them much too long.

Finally, I would say to all women at home finding themselves unfulfilled, 'Buy a computer!' and start an exciting new hobby.

Your sincerely, Mrs M. Henson, Leicester.

AS you'll probably see from this issue, Mrs Henson, we are doing a bit more for Adventurers now, but the best help comes from other readers exchanging information – so feel free. Meanwhile (another?!), £12 worth of software on its way to Mrs Henson. Some of our next letters also had things to say about Adventure games . . .
LM



HELP!!!

I'm desperate. I've just bought the adventure game *Black Crystal*, and I have read the booklet more than once, but I still don't know what on earth I'm meant to be doing. **Map 1** was hard enough, but by accident I stumbled on two rings and made my way to the castle – then it gets hard. In **Map 2** I have no idea of what to do. And without this know-how the game is wasted as far as I am concerned. Please help!

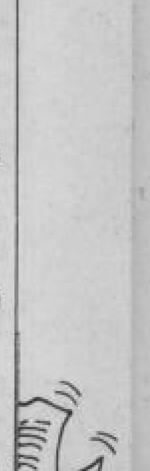
Colin Warner, Letchworth, Herts.

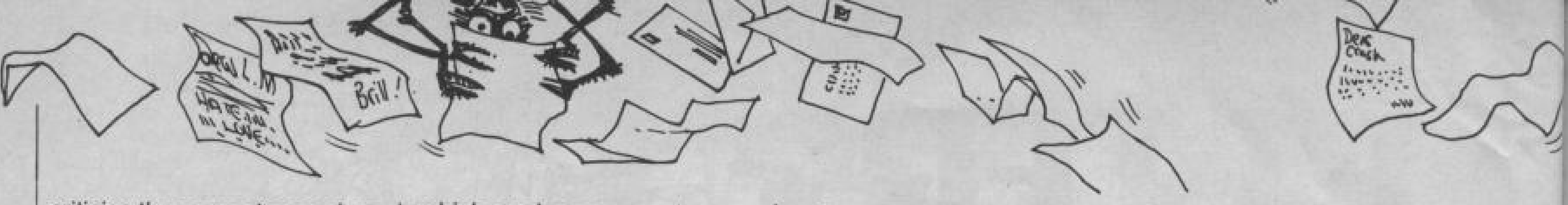
Anyone know the answers? The next reader obviously doesn't . . .
LM

BLACK ZXTAL

I would like to complain about Carnell's *Black Crystal*. The cover is very deceiving. It says that *Black Crystal* is an epic role-playing game. When I read this and the pamphet inside, I paid out £7.95 and eagerly rushed home. As soon as it loaded, I cringed at the graphics. Surely this is not what the 48K Spectrum is capable of? Apart from being a bore, the graphics are extremely poor, and the game itself is almost exactly the same as the ZX81 version.

I would like to congratulte **Legend** on *Valhalla*. This ingenious adventure has resulted in many hours of enjoyment, with killing innocent characters like Mary, who pops up everywhere and gets in the way. I think *Valhalla* is twice as good as that boring game, *The Hobbit*. And I





criticise the percentages given in the February issue of CRASH. I found the game extremely addictive and excellent value for money. I think your cross-eyed reviewers need to play it again. The only thing I need to know is how to find **Ofnir**, the first quest in *Valhalla*. I have spent ages searching in vain. Can anyone tell me?

Well, can anyone? I'm afraid our cross-eyed reviewers obviously won't be much help . . .

GOING THE WRONG WAY

Dear Sir,

Thanks for a great magazine. What a refreshing change from all the others full of goblidigook. I bought a 48K Spectrum for the kids (and myself) for Christmas, and we are hooked on lots of games. But I don't know if we're thick or something, I don't think so, but we cannot get on with the adventure *Inca Curse*. After the first two locations we are at a loss for something else to tell it to do, apart from ———. We recently borrowed another adventure, *Greedy Gulch*, and were a bit more successful, but still found ourselves going round in circles. Are we going about these sort of games in the wrong way? If you have any suggestions I would be pleased to hear them.

Yours faithfully, Bernard Moseley, Conisborough, Doncaster.

Without knowing in more detail how it is you actually 'go about' them, it's a bit hard to say much. We are now having a regular Adventure column, so perhaps some tips and hints may emerge from that for you.

LM

TITLE SCREENS

Dear CRASH,

Many thanks for publishing my letter (March). I'm just writing to tell you that I actually bought a brand new portable colour TV from Currys. It's their own make, Triumph 8026. I'm very pleased with it as it works very well with my Spectrum. Anyway . . .

I'd love to know how most software houses produce title-pages for their games which come up while the game is loading. Especially games produced by *Ultimate*, which produce an exact picture of the cover. But doesn't this take up loading time?

By the way, do you have any plans for producing a binder for holding issues of CRASH as this would be very useful?

Yours, Karl Flaschke (14), Wembley, Middlesex.

Glad the TV worked itself out all right, Karl. The answer is YES, title-pages do take up loading time. That's all, they don't take up any memory which the game needs. While the picture is being produced, nothing else is happening. Title pictures are produced in a variety of ways, sometimes by a utility like Melbourne Draw, *sometimes by drawing out the graphics on graph paper and then via machine code directly on to the screen. This is done by loading the memory area of the screen, and you can usually see the picture building up. Some companies now use the clever method of having the PAPER and INK colours the same during loading of the Screen, so it all remains white instead of building up the black first. That way they can alter the attributes at the last second and immediately a full colour picture seems to appear. In fact it's been there all the while, but you can't see it because it is effectively white lines on white paper. As to the binders, the answer again is YES. Details should appear somewhere in this issue (if I haven't been mislead – again).*

LM

CRASH

Dear Lloyd,

I bought Issue 2 of CRASH today, and two hours later I dented my car on a pillar in the car park. Is this a record?

Yours faithfully, Roger French, Shepperton, Middlesex.

You're supposed to play arcade games on the TV screen and not in the local car park. What is the car, by the way, a Morris?

KEY CHEATS

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the new magazine that you have published. I purchased one for my grandson, and I found the contents to be excellent.

It appears that it is the 'in thing' in schools to collect as many programs as possible and, whilst it is illegal, they are all busy making copies. If when reviewing programs you published the keys used in the game, with the above in mind, it would probably create more interest in your magazine and boost your sales. When the programs are exchanged often the information passed over is scanty, so copies of CRASH can be bought to fill this gap. I know it is unfair to the software houses for this activity to be going on, but it is human nature to do it, so why not capitalise on it to boost your sales?

D.H. (address not given).

We do, of course, publish the keys used in a game, and you aren't the first person to point out that we might do it to help the illegal copiers of software. A moment's reflection, and most people would recognise that this is silly. Any semi-intelligent games player can sort out the keys to control a game after a few minutes' experimenting, so we're not doing much there to help. Our aim is to give a clear picture of how the game is played without use of a joystick so would-be buyers can better make up their minds whether they like a control key arrangement. As to human nature, well the more schools copy games and the more the copy clubs get together for an evening's swapping of illegal games, the less likely it is that there will be decently produced games about for them to buy to copy in the first place. Their choice, I suppose.

LM

A ROUND SUM

Dear Sir,

I was very impressed with your first issue of CRASH, so I couldn't wait for the next issue, especially after I saw your advert in *Popular Computing Weekly* (Feb 16-22) offering 10 Jet Set Willy tapes to be won. However, I have looked from cover to cover but cannot find the competition referred to.

Giles Taylor, Exhall. Coventry.

Giles, the competition, as such (dreamed up by some madman in the publicity department, no doubt) wasn't actually in the March issue of CRASH. On the PCW ad it said, **'Somewhere "around some" isn't. Where is it?'** *The idea was to search through Issue 2 and find the bug created by some typographical error (Mark Harvey, poet extraordinary, would have approved, no doubt). In fact the answer was to be found on page 94 of CRASH, Issue 2, in the article about W.H. Smith and their computer shops. Intro paragraph, line 9: 'This month our roving reporter took a whirlwind trip* **a round sum** *of W.H. Smith's bigger computer shops.' Get it? Well, a few people did actually. Sorry to hve been so obscure. Sometimes our publicity department leaves one simply speechless . . .*

LM

RATINGS – ARE THEY FAIR?

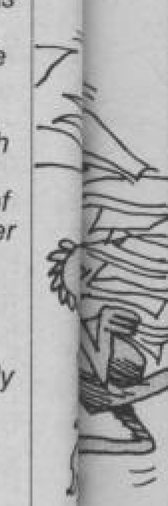
Dear CRASH,

I have been a dedicated arcade games player for some years now (comes of being raised in Blackpool!) and since I bought my Spectrum I have been a dedicated computer games player. I do have limited funds though, hence you can see how pleased I was to see CRASH.

Enough of the praise. I have a critical eye and tend to take seriously only those programs which get over 80% on your ratings. But you seem to have a marked bias in the ratings in favour of arcade games. What about *Hunter-Killer, 1984* and *Paintbox* – all top-quality products without top-quality marks? What will you do to *Apocalypse*? Perhaps that's unfair, but perhaps you should separate the reviewed products into sections and have a game-of-the-month in each section – arcade, adventure, strategy, utility and educational. Also, on the point of the CRASH HOTLINE, couldn't you allow bracketing of some games as joint tops – they could be enjoyed for different reasons. Oh, I had a whole speech prepared. Never mind. Congratulations. If I only had enough money for one magazine a month CRASH would be the one. (PS. Did you know that on level 25 of *Deathchase* the bikes shoot back?)

David Emery, Victoria Park, Manchester.

Our ratings have caused some comment, and it is a problem. Our Editor (his









blessed name be praised) didn't want any ratings on the reviews, believing in his infinite widsom that the written word alone should suffice. In my (humble) opinion, the ratings are fine, but they should be taken very much into account with the review itself. One advantage of having several different reviewers per piece is that you tend to get a more balanced view – the disadvantage is in the ratings, where one dissenter out of three reviewers obviously lowers the average figure for each heading – that should really be heavily borne in mind. But the majority of readers clearly do like to have some sort of rating system. I'll be interested to see the results of our Questionnaire from Issue 3 (April) – have you filled yours in yet? That might throw some light on the ratings system.
LM

Please could you tell me how you decide what rating to give a program? Surely to decide between 83% and 84% for something like 'Getting Started' must be a little difficult to say the least!
G.G. Harvie, Tiverton, Devon.

It may look rather arcane, but as the figures arrived at are made up of an average of three persons' opinions, it's not so odd. Also there may actually be more difference than one point, as we stopped using ½% after the first issue, so 82½%, for intance, gets rounded up and 84.4% gets rounded down.
LM

Of course, all reviewing and criticism is to an extent affected by personal bias, but your standard reviewing format, with overall ratings, seems to give a sensible and fair assessment of every game.
Neil, Talbot, Bromsgrove, Worcs.

I was interested in your ratings at the end of each full review, but how about a rating for beginners? It could point out such things as: Is the game too fast (arcade) for beginners?; too complicated (adventure); instructions too complicated, etc.
Brian Longstaff, Sheffield.

I would like to say that I have noticed that your magazine and other such mags sometimes say, 'A game not for the amateur arcade game player, etc . . .' I think that is wrong to say since you are under-estimating the poer of a new or not so new games player. You could say you are being prejudiced. Another thing is your reviewing system. I disagree with percentages as marks, since a game I like you regard as a failure. You don't say so, but the percentage marks make up for lost words. This is just a mere morsel of complaint and I can safely say I will trust all, well nearly all, of your reviews.
Jason Savage (13), Acocks Green, Birmingham.

I am intrigued to know how CRASH gets hold of all the games it reviews. Does it buy them up, or are they given by the various software houses? If you buy them I can't see how all the games can be bought and such a great magazine be produced from a meagre 75p. an issue.
J.L. Griffin, Hayling Island, Hants.

Neither can the publisher! Still, we try. In most cases the software houses send us 'review copies', but there are quite a few who aren't sufficiently organised, or perhaps they don't like us enough, to send review copies through. Then we buy them up.
LM

I decided to enter your reviewers competition. What a job! It was the hardest competition I've ever entered. I didn't realise what your poor reviewers were going through. Please forgive my remark about your reviewers' mistakes (deleted for fear of a reviewers' strike – LM) because now I can sympathise with them. They have obviously started sabotaging the magazine in a desperate bid to get some sleep. . .
John Butlin, Blackpool, Lancs.

Nobody here noticed they were awake in the first place. Still, enough of the problems facing reviewers. . .

FACING BACKWARDS

Dear CRASH,
What is the average life expectancy of your reviewers? Why do I ask? Well imagine the scene – your reviewer driving down a busy motorway at 70mph – he looks in the mirror and sees a police car moving up on him. He thinks, 'If the police car is coming towards me I must be in reverse. Help! I'm going backwards!'
With lightning reactions, he swerves to avoid the police car and ends up under the wheels of a 20 ton lorry – CRASH!!
Don't be silly, I hear you say.
Funny, that's just what I said

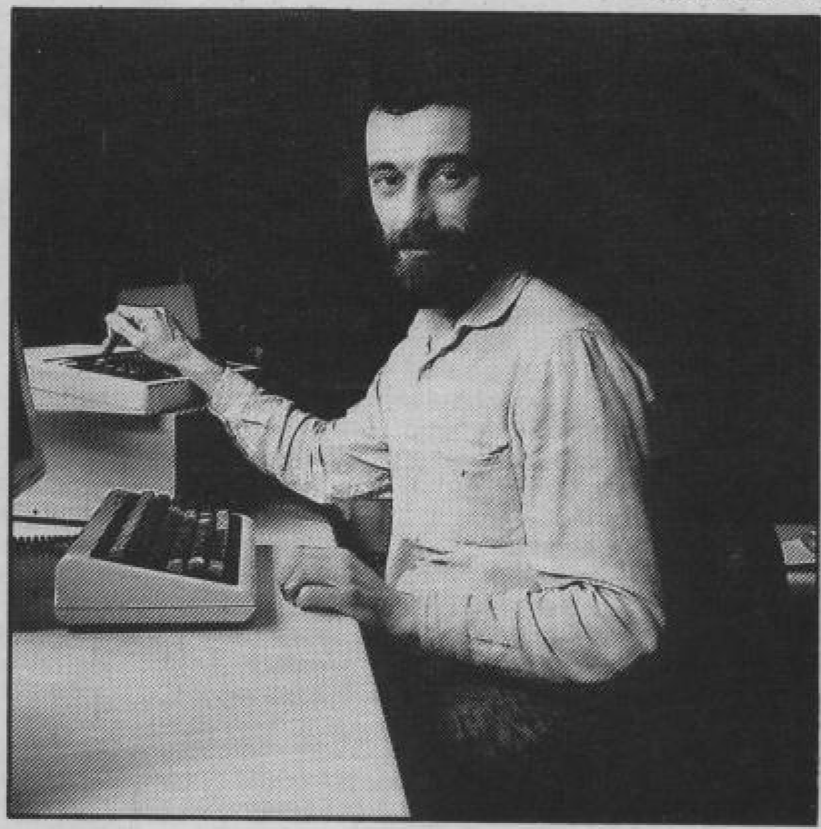
102



Ian Weatherburn



John Gibson



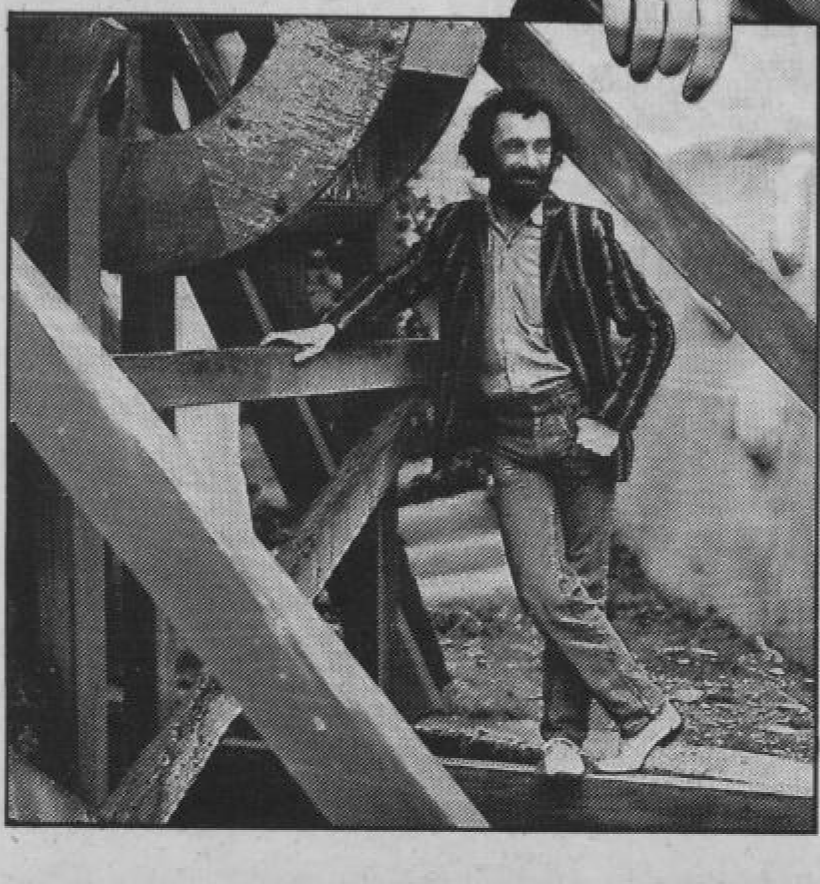
John: "Yes with ZZOOM one of the big problems was getting the graphic perspectives right, for example the line on the road gave a reference point but to achieve real 3D and animation and also ensure that all the objects increased in size realistically was a pain, for example the Extron missile spins toward you and increases in size at the same time, a big problem. Mind you the hardest part was working out some way of not running out of memory in about five minutes flat . . . that must have caused you some sleepless nights with Alchemist."

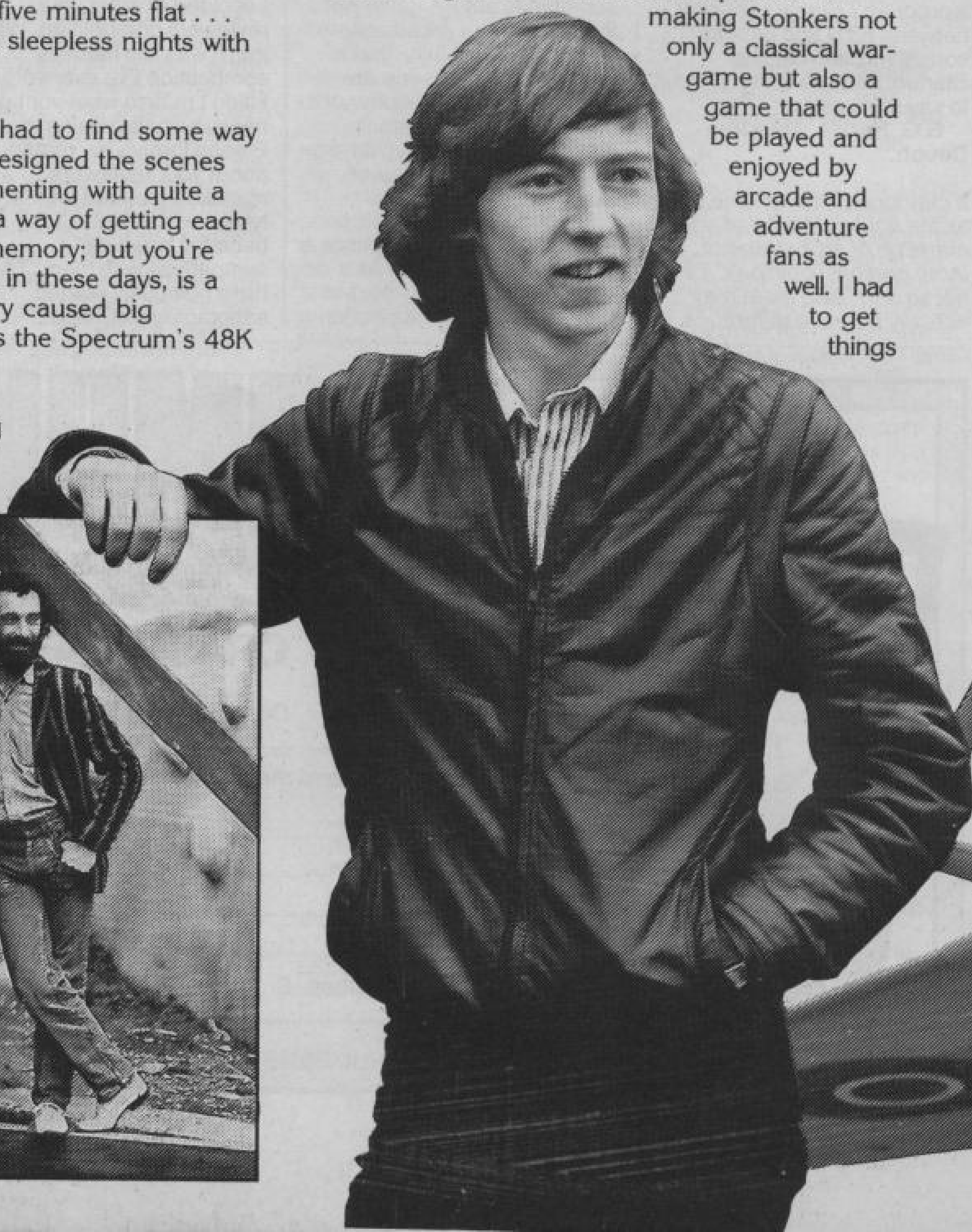
Ian: "Yeh, with so many scenes I had to find some way of compressing everything, so I designed the scenes two screens wide then by experimenting with quite a few techniques managed to find a way of getting each line down to just a few bytes of memory; but you're right getting everything into what, in these days, is a relatively small amount of memory caused big problems. In the old 8K PET days the Spectrum's 48K was a lot, but now . . . well . . . "

John: "You're right that was a big headache with Stonkers, by the time I'd written the raw data I'd used up 21K so bang goes half your memory . . . so it's thinking cap time . . . remember we got together on that one."

Ian: "I'm not likely to forget . . . but we cracked it in the end."

John: "Right, but then I had the problem of making Stonkers not only a classical war-game but also a game that could be played and enjoyed by arcade and adventure fans as well. I had to get things







moving so fast that the player really had to sweat, you know leave them no time to think, with plenty of computer controlled enemy action going on without the player knowing about it, just like a real war in fact".

Ian: "Yeh, its amazing how you can get hooked on playing around with techniques, before I wrote Zip Zap I used to experiment just for fun, but when it comes to producing a commercial product . . . well . . . it's hard work time; the amazing thing is you can sit down at ten in the morning and the next thing you know it's four o'clock the following morning and you suddenly realise why your body aches and your eyes feel as if someone has thrown a hand full of sand into them. The worst thing is entering all the data".



John: "But it's worth it in the end, the best bit I find is when you've finished writing some code and it doesn't crash and you can see it doing what it's supposed to do on the screen, it's like writing a book and directing a film and seeing everything come out right . . . a great feeling."

Ian: "I find some of the coding tricks I come up with really exciting, it's the creative bit I like, mind you the best thing about writing a game is driving around in the BMW afterwards . . . the trouble is mine's been stuck in the garage ever since we got to grips with Bandersnatch."

John: "Yeh and it looks as if it's going to stay there for a few more weeks."

Ian: "Thanks mate . . ."





Will you accept this mission?

In your Z5 Luna Hover Fighter you must penetrate the 3 successive Seiddab defensive zones and destroy their command base.

The state of your fighter and its armaments along with status reports of the Seiddab defences is given below.

Good luck! May the power be with you.



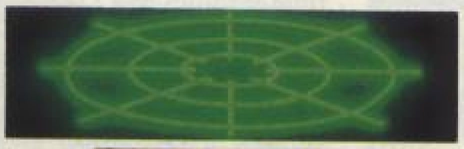
LASERS

Short range weapon system. Iridium powered. Powered up and operational.



MISSILES

Long range weapon system. Radar homing duodec warhead. Armed and ready to fire.



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Long range, over the horizon sensors. Tuned to the plasma output of Seiddab hover fighters.



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£5.95 £7.95 £5.95

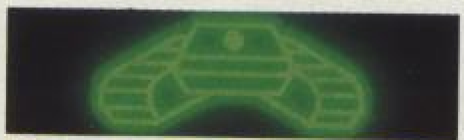
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DAB TANKS

Robotically controlled. Ytsan missiles – armed. Susceptible to laser strikes.



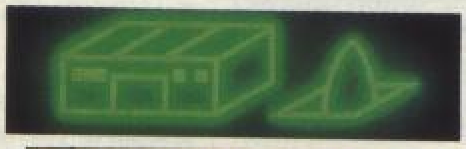
SEID HOVER FIGHTERS

High power, low manoeuvrability strike craft Plodium missiles – armed. Susceptible to missile or laser strikes.



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Contain proximity fuses, explodes on detecting hoverfighter. Susceptible to laser strike.



MISSILE SILO

Final line of defence – self activating. Hewstron Warhead. Susceptible to laser strike.



COMMAND BASE

Your objective – heavily defended requires many strikes to destroy – you must not fail.

3D LUNATTACK

Microspeech Compatible

A Crash Smash

Code Name Mat

Producer: **Micromega**
Memory required: **all of 48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Derek Brewster**

'Mission: Alien termination – the desperate plan to place in the mind of a teenager the combined tactical skills of all the planetary leaders in the solar system. MAT is mankind's last hope. . . . . Now your mind is Mat's mind. Take control of the Centurion and blast off on the greatest adventure of all. . . . .'



'Now your mind is Mat's mind. . .'



The Green Hills of Earth thank you for saving mankind from the Myon threat.

Inlay cards usually leave something to be desired when describing a computer game, but considering the scope of *Code-Name Mat*, **Micromega's** is almost terse. For decades the Myons have sought to dominate the Solar system and they have launched an all-out attack, knowing that Earth has developed a revolutionary new space craft. Unfortunately there is only the prototype, USS Centurion, and you as Mat are in command.

How to describe the game? As we said in our preview feature last issue, a starting point might be Star Trek games, but only as a convenient departure point, for *Code-Name Mat* has gone boldly further, resulting in a game of arcade action combined with real simulation which calls for a number of different skills. In brief: The Myons are attacking Earth, starting from the outermost planets of the solar system. This divides the game up effectively into sectors which equate with the planets Pluto, Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars and Earth. The Myons tend to attack a planet and attempt to reduce it to rubble which will be used to increase the numbers of their attacking fleet. In the last event, it is better to destroy a planet yourself than to let it fall into Myon claws. The solar system is seen on the **Solar Chart.**

The second chart is the **Sector Scan,** a 10 x 7 grid which shows the position of the main planet, any satellite bodies like moons, positions if Myon fleet units, your own defence units (more later) and positions of stargates (red – outer system/ cyan – inner system). Travel between sectors within a planetary system is done by means of a **warp gate**. A cursor can be moved to the desired sector and then the Centurion must be piloted (using the view screen) at the gate which will appear in front of the craft. Failure to achieve the transition will result in the Centurion ending up in some other sector. Travel between planetary systems is done by navigating through one of the two **stargates** in much the same way.

Long Range Scan is a 3D global representation of your area of space. The Centurion is seen as a dot at the centre. This is one of the most amazing aspects of the game, and one of the hardest to get to grips with. A craft disappearing behind you will reappear ahead. If you loop the loop the display will rotate vertically as if you were looking down through a revolving cylinder. To play well, you must master your scanner.

Instrumentation and its use is very critical, flying by the seat of your pants alone will not suffice. Instruments provided at the base of the view screen are Energy (basically a strength factor – when it reaches zero – you're dead), Velocity, Angles from a tracked object both vertical and horizontal, Object range, Object number, Shield Status, Tracking Computer Status. When the Tracking Computer is on, it will automatically switch between a forward and reverse view from the ship to face any object being tracked, such as an enemy fighter, and you always fire in the selected direction.you are up against three types of enemy craft: **Fighters**, which will attack as soon as you enter an area containing one, **Cruisers**, will only attack when within a range of 3,000; **Base Stars** (nicknamed hamburgers), which will attack immediately. If their shields are worn down, hamburgers run away for two minues until the shields are regenerated.

The Myon attack continues once the game has started quite independently of your actions, unless you stop them, of course, and it takes a great deal of skill to contain their movement through the solar system. Your instrumentation is vulnerable to damage, which can leave you blind, but parking in orbit around a planet will result in a drone coming up to meet you. This refuels and repairs all damage.

If you wish to play with full strategy options, then selecting the second mode, **Commander**, means that you are also in control of **Planetary Defence Fleets**. These can be moved about and used to help in the battle to great effect, opening up a whole new game. Fleets are communicated with via the Subspace Transmitter.

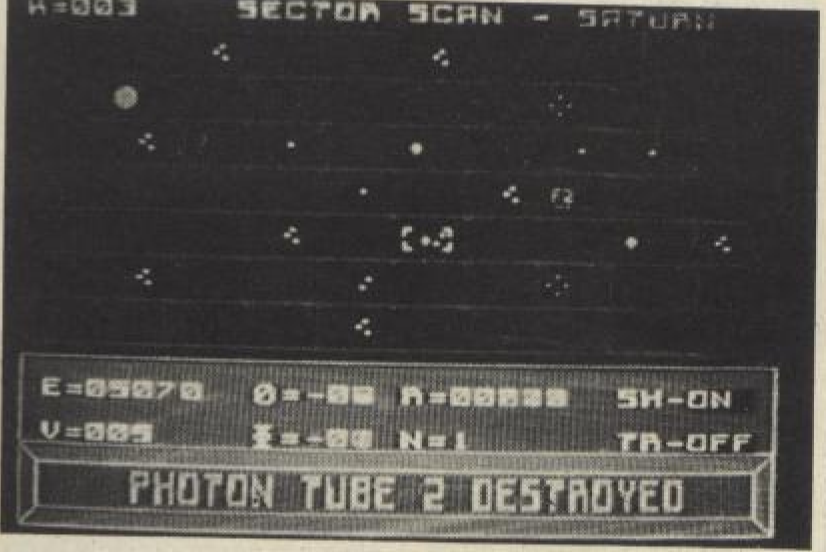
To describe fully the complexities of *Code-Name Mat* would take a volume, and this introduction only scratches the surface of the game.

CRITICISM

'Although there are loads of keys and functions to get used to, you do find that they are all very useful, and it doesn't mean that you can't start to play immediately. The graphics have hit a new high for the Spectrum; they are extremely fast and you are

given an amazingly realistic 3D view and they are varied as well. I like the way that even if you have lost your engines through enemy action, there is still a way of limping to a planet for repairs by keeping your finger on the thrust key. This causes the engines to "stutter." The planets are all drawn very well, as are the drones that come to refuel the Centurion. This game is well balanced between strategy and arcade and there is a lot of interaction between computer and player. Forward planning plays a major part too. I don't think I can find any way of telling people to buy this game that would be sufficiently adequate. Just buy it!

'Amazing 3D graphics! Enemy craft really do come from hundreds of miles away until they zoom over your shoulder. Only the planets are a bit jerky as you approach, but then, with so many of them and in such good detail, and only 48K that's not surprising. It is obviously going to take a long time to plumb the intricacies of *Code-Name Mat*, and that means high addictivity, helped along by the exciting space battles and tremendous playability. If there's anyone out there who doesn't like this game, perhaps they should go back to Ludo.'



'First impressions of Code-Name Mat are terrifying. Not only are there a lot of screens to cope with, but also a lot of keys, although joysticks may be used. But despite appearances, this turns out be to a user-friendly game and, despite its complexity, it isn't one where you seem to get lost in space like so many other similar games. Mind you, I can't think of another game to really compare it with. You might just have climbed into a space ship and hurtled skywards, it's all so realistic. All the graphics are superb, and all the instrumentation is essential to successful playing. Perhaps the only "cheap" effect in the whole game is the stargate warp effect, with its flashing colours. The 3D is not only effective it's also varied. The Long Range Scan is a really exciting development. Realism is even taken to the degree that when the forward view flicks to the rear, the keys, of course, alter their left/right function, which can be confusing at first. The depth of the game will ensure that it is played for a long time to come.'

COMMENTS

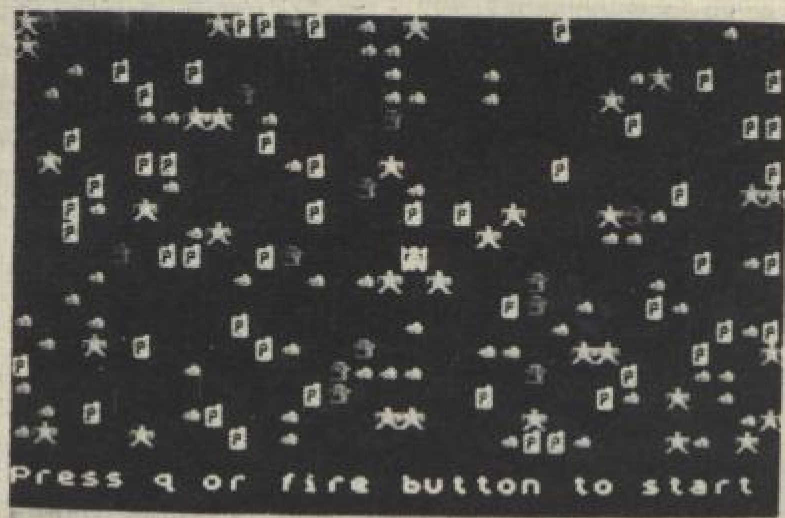
Control keys: 6/7 left/right, 8/9 up/down, Ø fire: Engines: 1/2 decelerate/accelerate, 3 decelerate to full stop, go to cruising speed, 5 go to full speed (not available with cursor joysticks): W warp drive, D shields on/off, A tracker, T transmit subspace, F front view, R rear view, L long-range scan, S sector scan, C solar chart
Joystick: AGF, Protek, Kempston, ZX 2
Keyboard play: instantaneous
Use of colour: well used
Graphics: outstanding
Sound: continuous, well used
Skill levels: 2 in effect, although they make for different games, and in addition there is a short game, full game with medium sized attack fleet, and full game with full-scale attack fleet
Lives: as it should be – only 1!
General rating: out of this world!

Use of computer	88%
Graphics	95%
Playability	94%
Getting started	98%
Addictive qualities	92%
Value for money	93%
Overall	**93%**

Crash

Producer: **Mogul**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **BASIC**
Author: **Mark Larner**

When we first saw the advertisement which mentioned *Crash*, we were quite excited, thinking that someone had named a game after us! Expectations that it would be a good game were soon dashed however. **Mogul** may be better known for their Commodore software, and one hopes so, because these few games they have for the Spectrum are simply not up to scratch, let alone Crash.



Small characters chase each other in search of a game.

Crash is a primitive driving game in which you guide a car around the screen, which is crowded with green lumps of cargo for which you get points, blue petrol pumps which keep you going longer, purple mechanics who you're supposed to avoid, and red houses that can be fatal if hit. The object is to clear the screen of all the cargo. Depending on the skill level selected, you may run over a few mechanics without losing your life, but too many will result in their taking action against you for dangerous driving. On higher levels of play, a single mechanic may prove fatal. It might all have been interesting if it had been worth it in the first place.

CRITICISM

'I can't believe a game like this is being marketed today. It is very boring, unaddictive, pointless and a waste of time and money. The car is not easily controlled due to lack of response in the keys, the colour isn't very bright and the sound is pathetically weedy. There are better things to waste your money on than this.'

'Crash exhibits all the characteristics of a very BASIC game with poor, slow block graphics, slow reading of the control keys, and a completely undeveloped idea. Its only saving grace is user-definable keys, but that's a bit like putting silk gloves on a pig's foot.'

'I can't think *Crash* is seriously meant for the arcade game playing addict, perhaps for his very young brother. The game offers nothing in the way of graphic delights and less than nothing in the playing (it can even give you a minus score). Less said the better.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: up/down/left/right – user-definable
Joystick: Kempston, or almost anything via UDK
Keyboard play: very slow
Use of colour: fair
Graphics: poor, simple blocks
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 10
Lives: 1
General rating: a waste of money, may have some appeal for younger children.

Use of computer	52%
Graphics	28%
Playability	20%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qualities	15%
Value for money	25%
Overall	**33%**

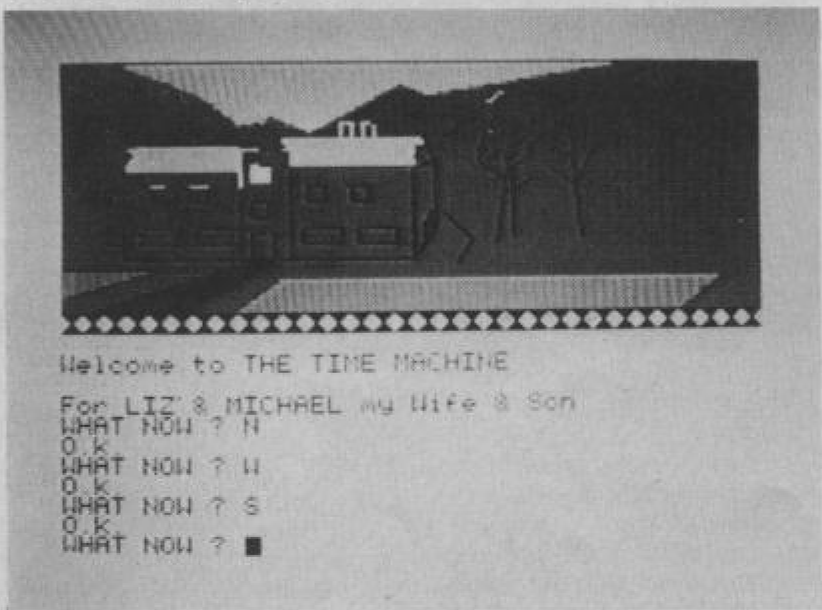


The Time Machine

Producer: **Digital Fantasia**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language:
Author: **Brian Howarth**

The Time Machine is one of Digital Fantasia's series of adventures which use text and graphics to neat effect.

You are a local reporter in this one, finally getting to grips with a truly challenging assignment – strange goings-on have been reported from the fog-shrouded moors. A Dr Potter has recently purchased a lonely house out there, and since then strange lights and sights have been seen by locals round the eccentric scientist's abode. All this causes a lot of concern, and you are sent to explore the situation for the local gazette. The quest starts with you stumbling around in the fog. If you manage to come across the house in question, you are led into an intricate search through a handful of time layers to find the missing – but that would give the game away.



CRITICISM

'All in all a very entertaining adventure for both novice and experienced adventurer alike, because if you're new to this sort of game Digital Fantasia helpfully offer you the option of sending for advice sheets which provide just enough clues to the various stages of the plot to see any thinking greenhorn on his or her way. So there's much less chance of your getting inextricably stuck in the early stages and giving up altogether, as with so many other adventure games.'

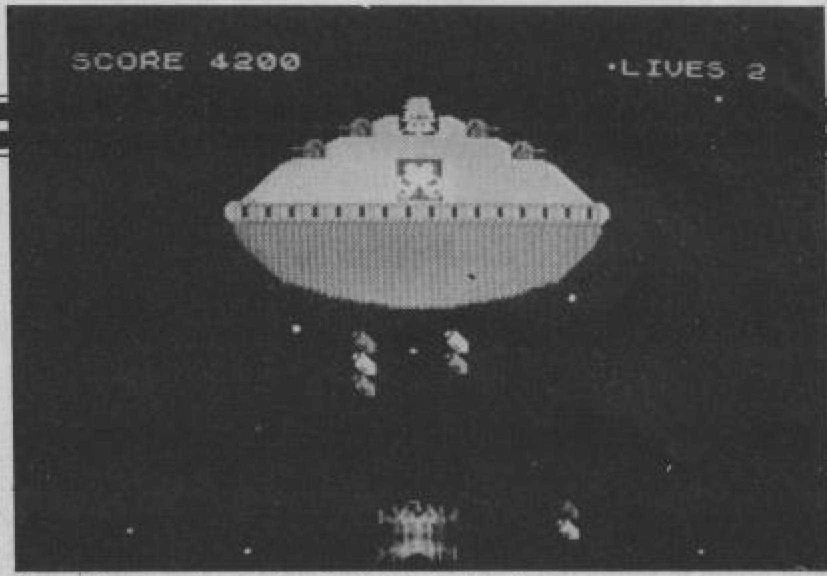
'What's good about this game, as with others by the same company, is that you have the option of switching between text only and graphics included mode at the press of the ENTER key. This avoids the waiting time for the pictures to form (which they do quite quickly) should you be impatient to get on. Descriptions are short and to the point. Computer response time is fast and jolly, creating a nice relationship between player and machine. There is plenty to do on this quest if you succeed in getting out of the fog at the beginning.'

'*Time Machine* lives up to its expectations beautifully from the stylish graphic scene setters to the snappy text. A great plot with a real sense of purpose which involves getting useful objects from one time zone which may well be needed in another. This makes for different stages of success until the final denouement and it all adds up to a high addictivity rating. H.G. Wells would have loved it, despite the slightly high price.'

COMMENTS

Response: fast
Graphics: optional, but well drawn and reasonably detailed
General rating: very good although high in price

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	68%
Playability	90%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	60%
Overall	**75%**



A veritable snowstorm of bombs in *Thunderhawk.*

Thunderhawk

Producer: **Lyversoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**

Thunderhawk is a 'Phoenix'-type game with three screens. In the first your ship, moving left and right at the base of the screen, combats seried ranks of hawk-like birds which drop bombs, and occasionally one will swoop down on you. In the second screen your rate of fire is slightly improved to cope with the increased numbers of hawks, bombs and their more frequent swooping attacks. Moving to the third screen, you are confronted with the large-sized mothership, the underside of which must be eroded by your gunfire until a hole can be opened up in the green conveyor belt and it all blows up. While this is happening showers of large bombs drop not only from the mothership but from empty space as well, if you move outside the ship's range.

Completing all three screens takes you on to level 2, a repeat with slightly higher odds.

CRITICISM

'It seems odd for a software house to be bringing out a 'Phoenix'-style game nowadays, but anything is welcome if it's good. Unfortunately *Thunderhawk* doesn't seem to offer anything new. The standard of graphics is fairly good, better than a lot of earlier versions, as one would expect, but the scope of the game isn't very large. There are no speed differences to select, and once the three screens have been completed, which is very easy for the first level of play, it loses much of its little attraction. Another annoying thing is that nowhere does it state what control keys to use.'

'I think this is meant to be a "Phoenix" lookalike. It does have a few features of the arcade original. Due to its lack of colour and sound it destroys the game's playability. The hawks dive and swoop very nicely, but shooting anything on the screen can be be difficult because the fire rate is exceptionally slow. The Mothership is quite nicely detailed and large, but its extraordinary bombing techniques – the bombs follow you about wherever you go, even beyond the ship's limits – are not at all like the arcade version, and are not an improvement. Graphics are nice and smooth, but not overfast. No useful information whatever has been put on the inlay or on the screen, so it's left to the player to figure out how to go about it.'

'The Spectrum may not be noted for its colour qualities, but I would have thought Lyversoft could have been a bit more imaginative in their use of colour in this game. Apart from the Mothership, with its magenta underbelly and orange top, the predominant colours are pale blue, blue and white. I would expect more from an arcade shoot 'em up today than this game ofers, and there are better, older versions available.'

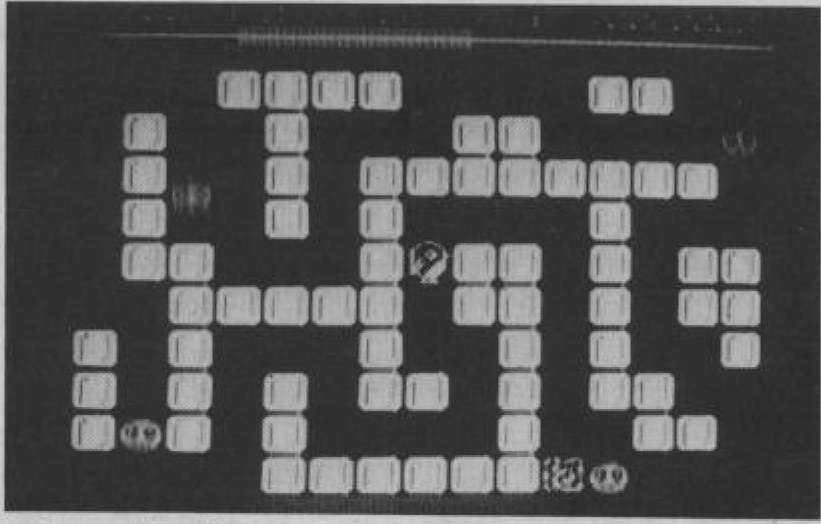
COMMENTS

Control keys: 4/5 left/right, Ø to fire
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: after discovering the keys, simple and responsive but the graphics are quite slow



Use of colour: poor
Graphics: above average, smooth
Sound: poor
Skill levels: progressive sheets
Lives: 5
General rating: average

Use of computer	53%
Graphics	58%
Playability	44%
Getting started	30%
Addictive qualities	35%
Value for money	40%
Overall	**43%**



Super smooth and fast acting Rennie tablets cure an indigestible bug in *Eskimo Eddie.*

Eskimo Eddie

Producer: **Ocean**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.90**
Language: **machine code**
Authors: **Christian Urquhart and Nick Pierpoint**

First thing you see with most games is the loading screen – it's hard to take your eyes off this one – a credit to Ocean and its authors.

Eskimo Eddie is a two-screen 'Pengo.' On the first you must rescue Percy Penguin three times. He's at the top of the screen and you're at the bottom. In between, two polar bears and three jagged holes in the ice move from side to side. The polar bears wrap around, one going to the right and the other, at a slower pace, going to the left. The ice holes just bounce from side to side, quite fast. So stage one is a bit like an icy 'Frogger.' The object is to cross the screen upwards, collect Percy, and then bring him safely back down.

Completing this screen three times moves you on to the more traditional looking 'Pengo' game. The screen is filled with what looks like a board of Rennie tablets, then to a loud twanging noise a maze is created by removing some of them to reveal Percy Penguin in the middle. Four snow bugs then pop up and the game begins. As usual in a 'Pengo' game, Percy can push the white snow blocks around the screen in the hope of squashing the bugs, or melt them to let him past. The edges of the screen may be electrified and any snow bug touching the same edge becomes dazed and can be run over. With this version, the killed off snow bugs come back after a few seconds until they have been killed twice.

Following screens have the same four bugs, but they are more intelligent in homing in on Percy.

CRITICISM

'The keys are very well laid out and offer a good response in moving the smooth graphics. The polar bears on screen one are especially well animated. Sound too is excellent with a strong, loud tune, although there isn't much to the actual game sound. This is a 'Pengo' game with much more content – perhaps not the best, but certainly very good value.'

'You effectively get two games for the price of one in Eskimo Eddie, a 'Frogger' and a 'Pengo.' This has obvious advantages in value but can prove to be a bit irritating when you have to wade through the first screen each time to play the second, main screen. Very good graphics with neat detailed touches. The actual game is quite a tough one with medium intelligent snow bugs, but very durable ones. Fortunately electrifying the fence has the effect of making all the bugs go slow, which device can get you out of a hole now and again. On the other hand, when you shove an ice block across the screen your movement is frozen, but not that of The bugs, who can then take the advantage and catch you. all in all, a very good game.'

'Great graphics and sound make this into an extremely playable game with lots of details, such as the way the ice blocks explode when 'melted.' Well-positioned keys, and responsive ones, help with the tough snow bugs. all in all a well thought out version of 'Pengo' where a lot of attention has been paid to detail, making it very good value.'

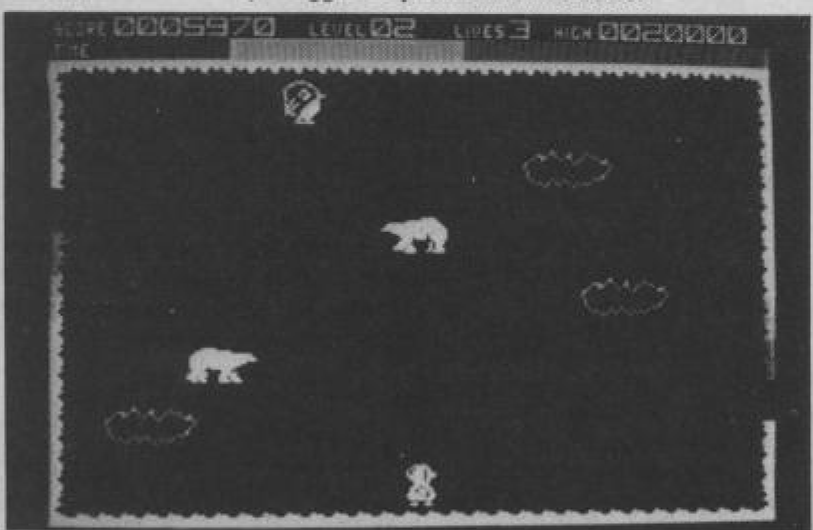
COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, N/M left/right, SYM SHIFT push
Joystick: Kempston, Protek, AGF, ZX 2
Use of colour: very icy
Graphics: smooth, fast, detailed, good
Sound: great tunes, less in the game itself
Skill levels: 1, but progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
Screens: 2
General rating: very good.

Use of computer	84%
Graphics	80%
Playability	80%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	75%
Overall	**78%**



Wrap up warm for the icy 'Frogger' sequence in *Eskimo Eddie.*



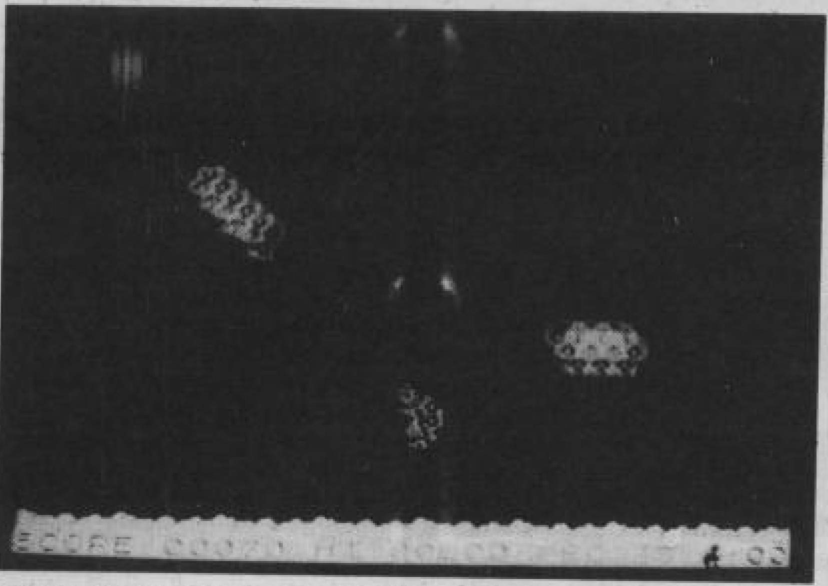
Two Gun Turtle

Producer: **M. C. Lothlorien**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Steve Hughes**

In the middle of winter a turtle is defending his strawberry patch against a variety of marauding bugs. Some go for strawberries, some go for the turtle. The turtle, for his protection, is armed with a gun – one, not two as the title might suggest, but that doesn't make any difference to this very fast game.

Bugs stealing strawberries, pick them up and sidle off screen, but if they are shot, then the strawberry drifts back to its place.

The game is played out against a calendar starting in October. As each month passes, the type bug changes. It's already snowing slightly, but as winer nears, larger snowf-



Flying turtle totes two guns against flying nasties after his strawberries.

lakes fall and these may be picked up for bonus points.

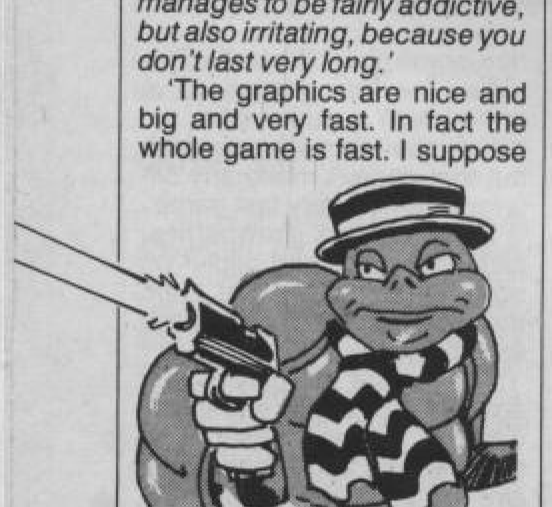
The strawberries, 12 in all, float in a neat three by four block at the centre of a black screen. In the background, pixel drops of snow fall. The monsters float in from both sides and the turtle may move all over the screen shooting in the direction of movement, but only hortizontally, although he can move in eight directions.

CRITICISM

'The graphics are nicely detailed, well drawn and move smoothly. They are also fast, and have to be as this is (almost) unplayably fast. I like the falling snow in the background and the explosions are very good. The bugs are super-intelligent, homing in on you in a gang if they can. The difficulty of firing in the direction of movement in a fast game is that you have to work ever so hard to keep far enough away from a bug to be able to turn and fire at it.'

'If you've got exceptionally fast reactions and the stamina of an elephant, you'll probably enjoy this game with its colourful, smooth and detailed graphics. The bugs change every month, not during a break between screens, but actually as the game is playing. Each bug has its own characteristic, the skulls, for instance, are ruddy deadly and come straight for you. It manages to be fairly addictive, but also irritating, because you don't last very long.'

'The graphics are nice and big and very fast. In fact the whole game is fast. I suppose the idea of a flying turtle is novel, but the game.is quite simple in itself. Hard to play though, you certainly have to move like greased lightning to shoot anything up and when there's two or three bugs it can be almost impossible to shoot them up in a row. Not bad, certainly worth a try to see if you like it.'



COMMENTS

Control keys: user-definable
Joystick: almost any type via UDK
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: very good, very fast
Sound: good
Skill levels: progressively difficult
Lives: 5
General rating: a good game, very tough, which may spoil its addictivity.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	83%
Playability	60%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	73%
Overall	**73%**

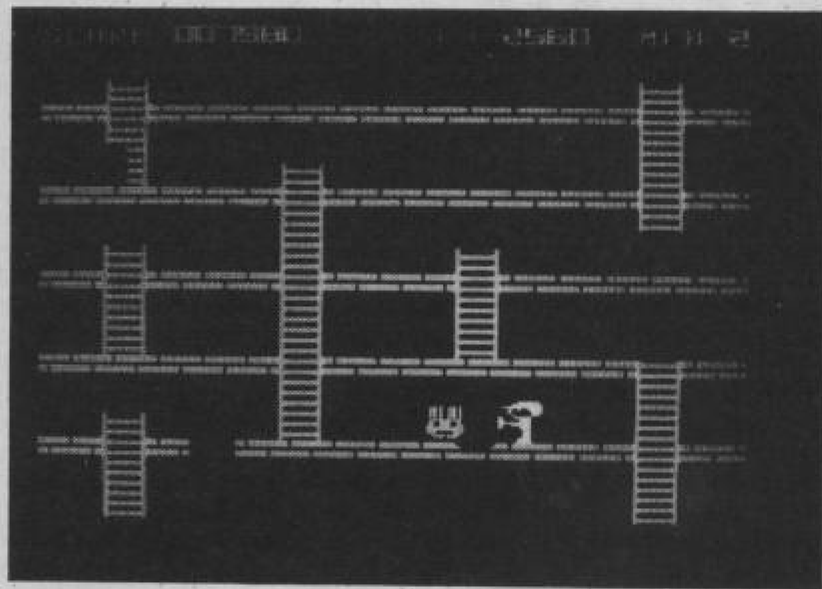
Sam Spade

Producer: **Silversoft**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **D. B. Chapman**

He meets them on the ladders –
On platforms left and right;
His only hope's to dig a trap,
They're much too mean to fight . . .

Thus starts **Silversoft's** 'Panic' game of platforms, ladders and monsters with a penchant for falling into holes. There are the traditional five levels connected with various ladders and three monsters on the first screen. Depending on their colour, monsters need to fall through either one hole, two or three. Monsters which get out of a trap before Sam hits them on the head with his spade will become more durable by changing colour.

There are, of course, many variations on 'Panic' now, each with their own idosyncracies, some better than others. This version boasts quite large characters.



CRITICISM

'There isn't much can be said about a 'Panic' game now that hasn't already been said. On the whole this one has large and smooth moving graphics. They are all four blocks large, but as they overwrite each other this results in the ladders vanishing to black where they pass, which lends a flickery aspect that looks quite amateurish. Another oddity is that there is only a single function key for dig and fill holes. It takes three presses to dig a hole or kill a monster, so as soon as the hole is dug it starts to fill again! This can be very frustrating in the heat of play. On the other hand, it does mean less keys to have to worry about. On the whole I thought this was a pretty weak version, especially for Silversoft.'

'The colour used is fair and the graphics, although large, are only average. It's a reasonable arcade copy in most respects, there's the falling oxygen level to worry about, and as you get through a few screens, there are a lot of monsters to worry about as well.'

'*Sam Spade* is a typical "Panic" game with nice big graphics and this is a good version of a game which is rather old now. I would say it's actually better than some and worse than others.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left/right, K/M up/down, L=dig/fill/kill
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: sensible keys make life easy, responsive
Use of colour: fair to average
Graphics: average, although large
Sound: good tunes, otherwise average
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
General rating: an old-style game, generally average.

Use of computer	62%
Graphics	57%
Playability	56%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	53%
Value for money	51%
Overall	**57%**





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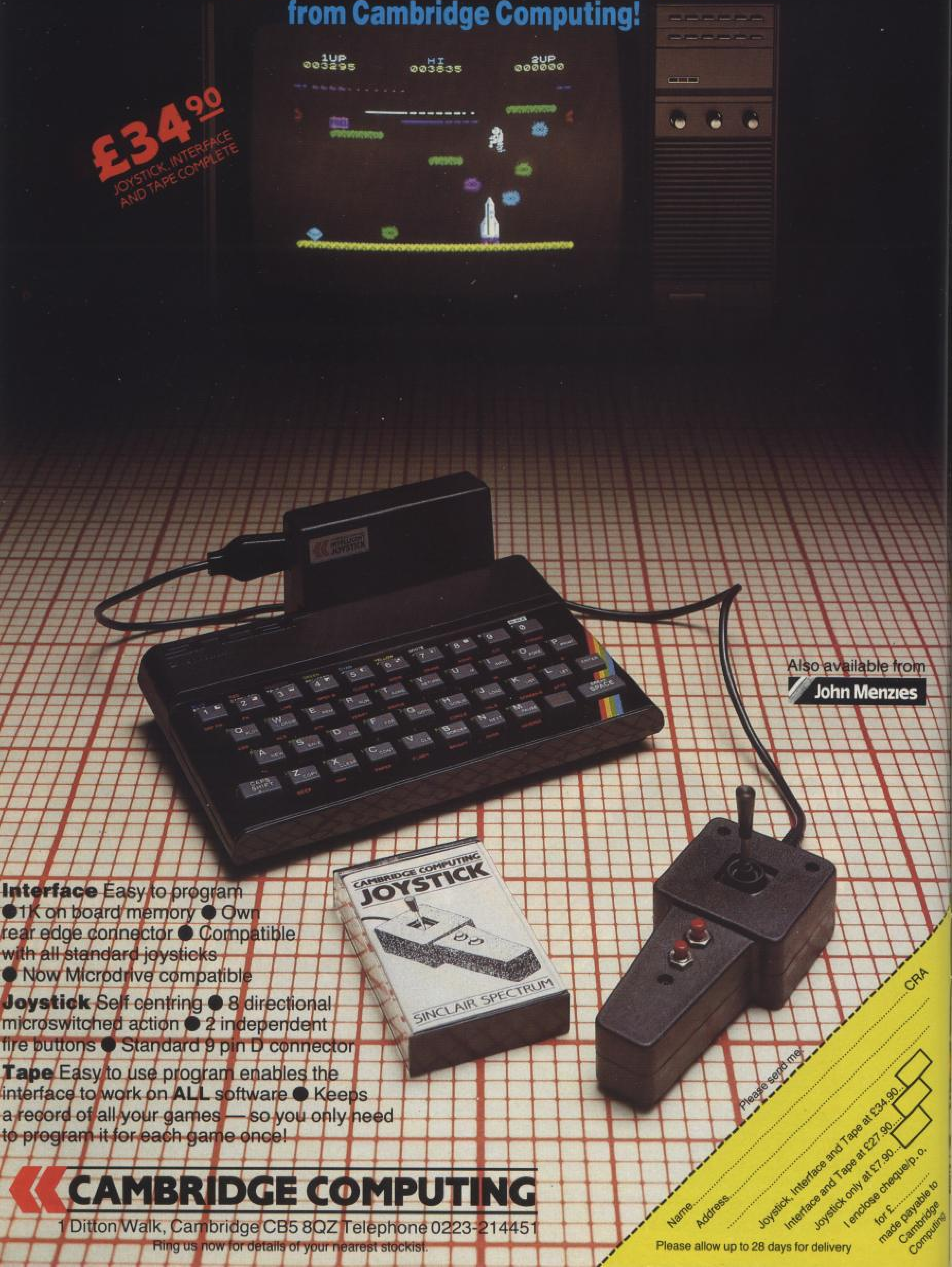
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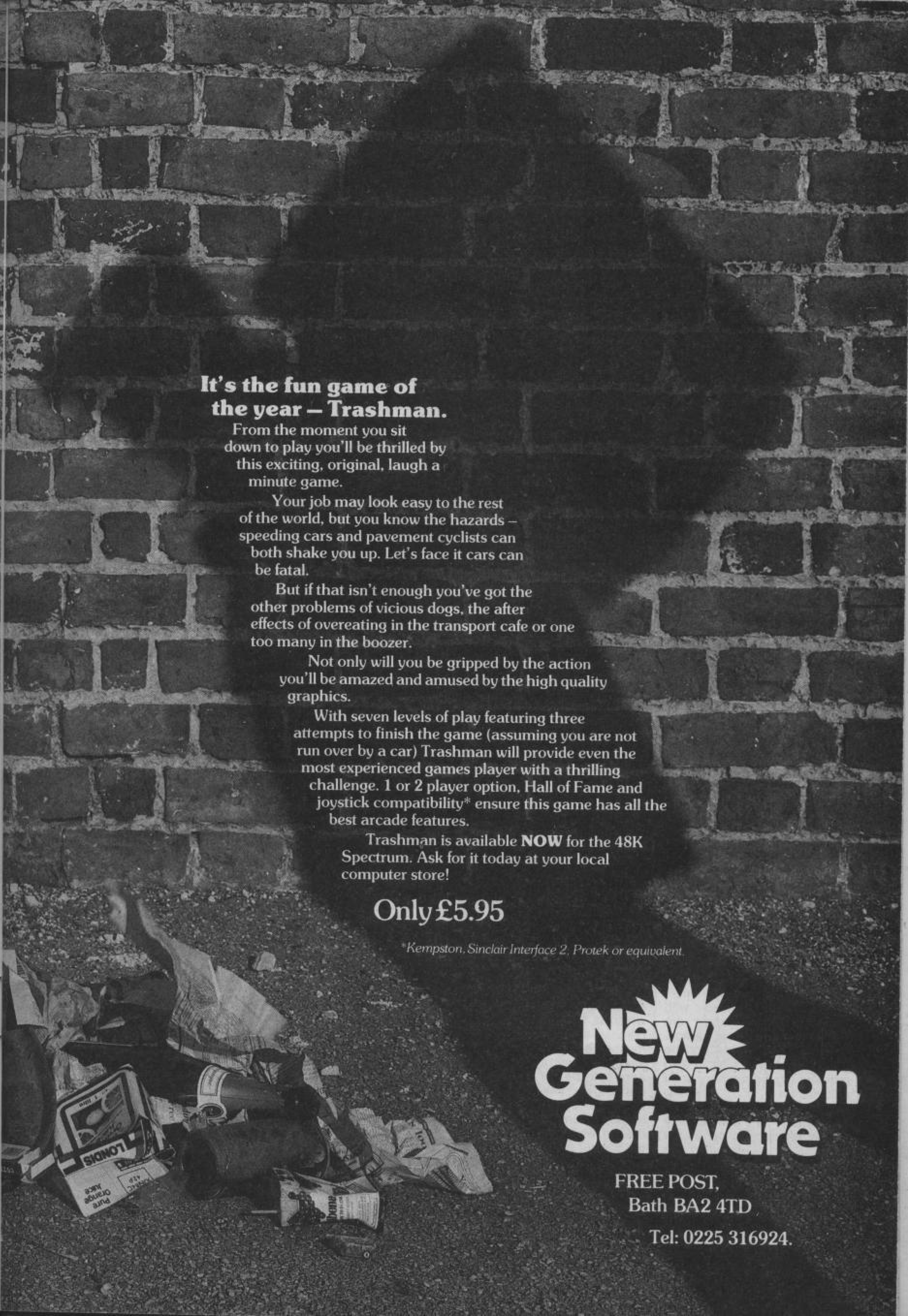
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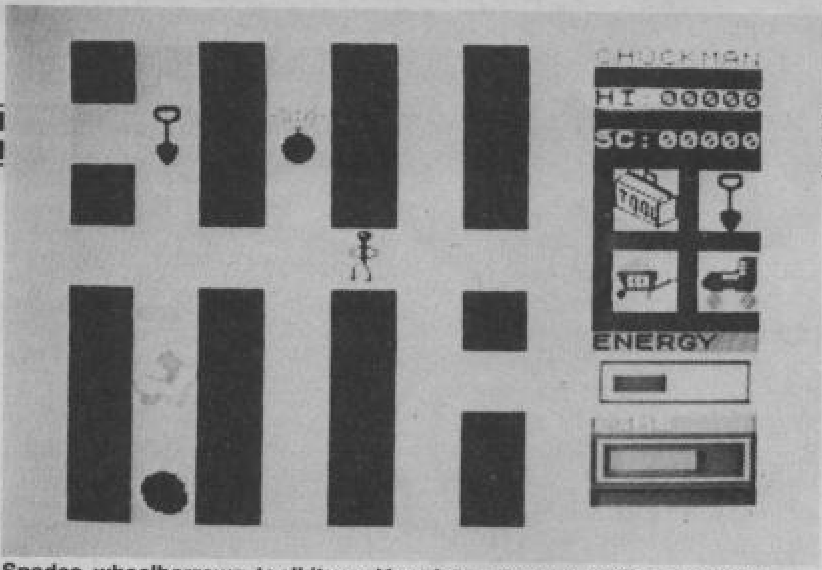


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CHUCKMAN



Spades, wheelbarrows, toolkits and bombs – get your skates on save the world from stomping boots.

Producer: **C.C.I.**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.00**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **K. Baker**

Chuckman is based on the popular arcade game and bears a faint resemblance to *Maziacs*. Chuckman roars around a yellow maze on a skateboard, desperately trying to find and defuse eight time-bombs before the time limit runs out. The maze is considerably larger than the playing area, although a general view of the maze immediately around Chuckman can be selected.

Time bombs can only be defused once a toolkit has been collected, and these are dotted at random about the maze, like the time-bombs. Equally there are holes in the ground which cannot be passed over safely, although these may be filled in if you collect a wheelbarrow first. Food is also availble and must be taken frequently if your energy level isn't to fall to dangerously low levels. The other major hazards are giant boots which tromp around killing you off. If you collect a spade first, it may be used to dig a hole, across which the boots cannot pass.

When all eight time-bombs have been defused, another eight will appear. Between different games the maze is randomly generated.

CRITICISM

'The skate boarder, when stationary, waits impatiently, tapping his foot and leaning on the skate board. His only protection against stomping boots is to dig a hole, although if he finds a pair of roller skates the boots seem afraid of them. I was very impressed with Chuckman: the graphis are good, your hero being particularly well implemented, and the game was fun to play. It also requires a good memory and I enjoyed it.'

'There's no doubt that Chuckman immediately recalls Maziacs *to mind, not only the maze, but also the very good animation of your hero. The graphics are of a high standard, with a very good status board to the right of the playing area, which shows time-bombs to defuse, hi-score, score, whether you are carrying a spade, wheelbarrow, a pair of skates for killing off boots, or a toolkit. It's one of those games that doesn't appear all that difficult at first, but ends up being really quite addictive.'*

'This is supposed to be based on the arcade game with a few differences, but I think they've forgotten the arcade game and developed an entirely new one. The map facility is very good, showing you about six times what you see when actually playing. The task is quite formidable, monitoring energy levels and avoiding pitfalls and boots. The scrolling action of the maze works very smoothly, and Chuckman is animated very well. There is no sound while playing, only when killed, something which may appeal to parents. A game that can be recommended.

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, C/B left/right, SPACE=view maze, CAPS SHIFT=dig pit
Joystick: Kempston (one reviewer noted that 'dig' didn't work)
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: good, smooth, detailed and big
Sound: very little
Skill levels: 3
Lives:
General rating: very good and pretty addictive.

Use of computer	72%
Graphics	80%
Playability	84%
Getting started	71%
Addictive qualities	82%
Value for money	82%
Overall	**79%**

Knight Driver

Producer: **Hewson Consultants**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: Machine code and some BASIC
Author: **Clive Brooker**

Knight Driver is not an attempt at 'Pole Position' and is content to more resemble some of the earlier Spectrum road games, which is not to say that it is primitive at all. In essence, you must steer a car along a fairly lengthy series of roads which appear to be set in a seaside resort town. The view is seen from directly above and the roads are defined with double broken white lines as though the painter from *Double Trouble* has visited the place before.

These roads twist and turn energetically past tree-filled parks, between houses and shops, past parked cars, round traffic islands and even turn into cul-de-sacs and car parks. The object, quite simply, is to get all the way through to the 'finishing' line without steering off the road. There are two levels, **Professional** and **Learner**. If you select Professional you lose one of your lives every time you veer off the road, whereas Learners don't, but have a time limit imposed on them. there ,is also an Automatic mode, which is really a demo.

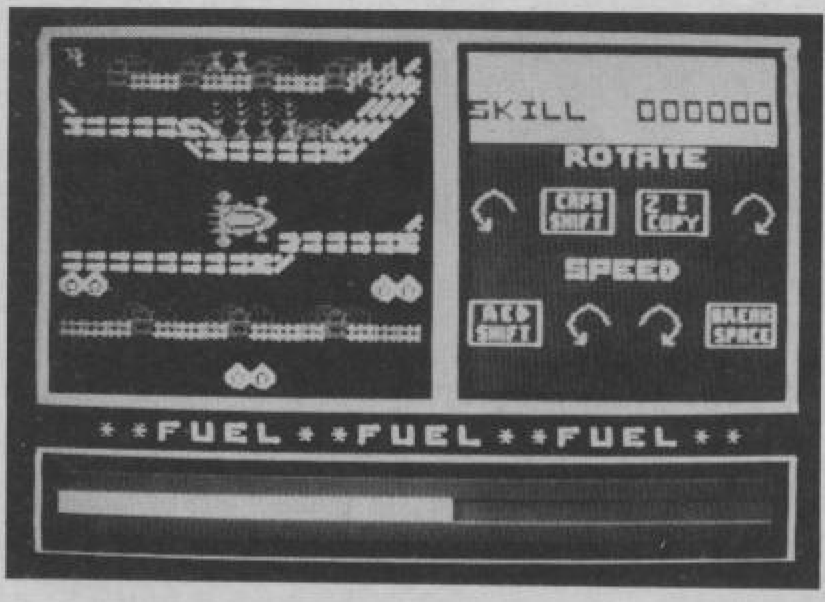
The screen display is divided into three areas. The two larger squares at the top are the town map and a large graphic device of your car flashing. Running along the bottom is a large report strip. When you have finished, or run out of time or lives, this reports back on how well or badly you did.

CRITICISM

'*Knight Driver* is a drive around a rather scenic track and the graphics are quite good. As the playing area is much greater than the display, the graphics are constantly on the scroll, and they do this rather well. Unfortunately the control is not exactly brilliant (possibly an Eastern bloc vehicle – Skoda, etc). The game is playable at first but I soon began to lose interest – just beating the clock gets a little boring after a while. Nice graphics, above average.'

'The scene is set in an empty town and you're the lonesome driver. The graphics are drawn very nicely and the streets move across the screen wonderfully. But steering your car is a disappointment and it's quite unrealistic due to the fact that 45° increments are used. Thus you tend to oversteer. Poor key response makes this factor worse. Otherwise colour and sound are well used. At the end of each game the computer prints out your score and a lengthy report in very large letters. This delays you having another go immediately – frustrating.'

'It's a pity, because the graphics are of a high quality,

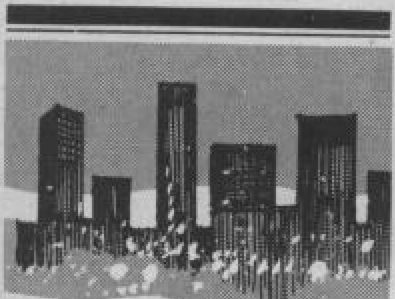


that this game really offers so little to the player. After a couple of turns around the streets I had had enough. The car is exceptionally difficult to steer, more like a tank than a saloon! This doesn't add to its playability and certainly bonks on the head any addictive qualities it might have possessed. The report, which comes in such large letters that only two or three words can be displayed at once, takes an age and only acts to interrupt any flow you may have achieved. I would have expected a bit more from Hewsons than this.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/CAPS SHIFT=left/right, BREAK/SYM SHIFT=accelerate/brake. ENTER to start
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: sensible keys, but the response is a bit slow and car control is difficult
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: nice and big, detailed and smooth with excellent scrolling
Sound: good
Skill levels: 2
Lives: 5
General rating: good graphics but ultimately a rather pointless game.

Use of computer	53%
Graphics	73%
Playability	60%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	57%
Overall	**59%**



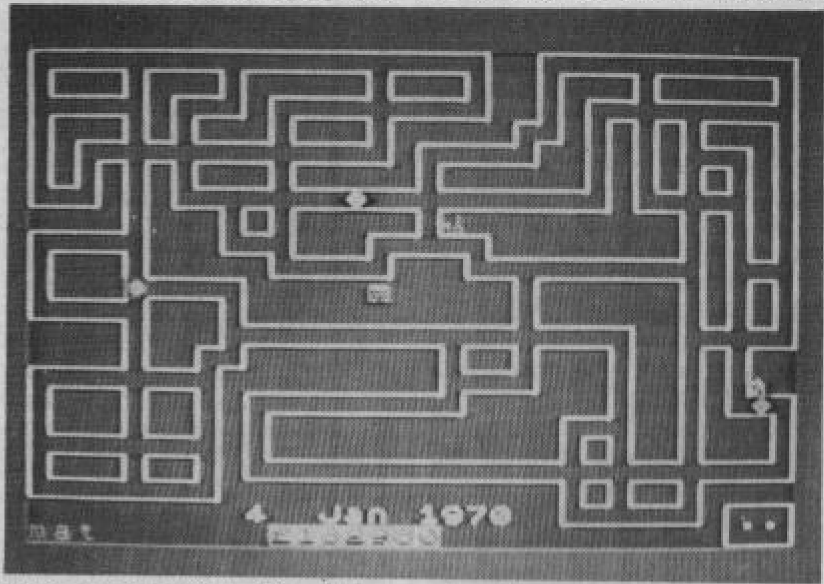
CITY

Producer: **Terminal Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **BASIC**

This is a board game for between one and four players, with the computer always taking part. Each player is given a coloured diamond marker to move around the board, a company name is entered, and the computer takes the green marker. The screen is formed by a complex grid of streets, intersections and T-junctions. When it is a player's turn to move the computer allots a random number of spaces which may be taken, the cursor keys controlling direction. When the move is complete there is an option to build a variety of institutions such as pubs, banks, factories, houses, apartments and shops. Each construction costs a set amount ahd there are a limied number of each type of construction available in a game. If a player builds something, a symbol appears in the location chosen in the company colour.

Between each move a black square crosses the screen, descending one line each time. He is the rent collector, who takes the rent for each property and puts it into the bank for the player. Money in the bank earns interest, but there are also taxes to pay.

Each player starts the game with £200,000 and the winner is the first to reach a million. As soon as the game starts, players must enter their names or the computer will take the turn and start building. When a player's turn is indicated, it must be taken immediately, or the turn passes to the next player. Bumping into another player's marker will send you to jail for a period depending on the number of previous offences. Four types of game of different lengths are available.



Get in smartish with the *City* or the computer will monopolise the board.

CRITICISM

'The game takes ages to play and is very slow. Key responses are also very slow because of the BASIC. The graphics are small and not really detailed, and I found the game generally uninteresting.'

'This is a sort of computerised Monopoly game. It has four playing lengths, but even the short game is extremely long. After an hour of playing with a friend we were just beginning to make money, but that million was a long way off. It requires some practice, is above average but not very addictive, and left me indifferent as to a verdict. In some respects it is better than Monopoly, but I quite like Monopoly whereas I wasn't very bothered with this game.'

'Based on Monopoly, *The City* doesn't play like Monopoly, the board isn't divided into rigid or traditional properties. The graphics are not very interesting, and left to its own devices for a moment, the compuer just carries on playing and winning. Not very exciting.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors, plus prompt inputs
Keyboard play: slow
Use of colour: reasonable
Graphics: small and uninteresting
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 1
General rating: fair, not at all addictive.

Use of computer	48%
Graphics	49%
Playability	35%
Getting started	49%
Addictive qualities	36%
Value for money	48%
Overall	**44%**

Handicap Golf

Producer: **C.R.L.**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **BASIC**

'Play a round of 18 holes on the "Spectrum" course of 5,444 yards. Your set of clubs consists of four Woods, eight Irons, a Pitch Wedge, a Sand Wedge and a putter. PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE . . .'

So goes the unpretentious start to **C.R.L.'s** charming golf simulation. Pressing any key then lists the 18 holes, the par and length for each, with a par for the course of 70. This is followed by a listing of the clubs with a graphic depiction of each and the distance in yards for each. Wind factor must be taken into account in the choice of club and direction, and the factor is also shown on the greens for putting. A final page asks whether one or two players are taking part. It is then possible to preview all 18 holes befoe starting if you so wish. This is not essential because you may view any hole before it is played as well. This element is quite important because, unlike almost every other golf program, this one splits the holes into several views, thus simulating the real game, where you would not be able to see the end of the hole in any detail.

The display is in a 3D-style perspective with 'you' and your





Valhalla on the golf course as caddy watches player take a shot. I can also see. . . a divot.

caddy seen standing ready on the first tee. The figures and animation of them is very reminiscent of the Valhalla graphics. Pressing P will allow a preview of the hole to be played; pressing C allows selection of club, bearing in mind the statistics printed below the display area. Club selection is made by pressing any key which moves a cursor arrow along under the clubs until it reaches the one desired. It may then be ENTERed. The angle of the shot is selected by using keys 6 and 7 to move a cursor marker on the side of the screen up or down, ENTERing when it is correct. In full animation, 'you' then swing and the ball curves away. As soon as it comes to a rest, the golfer staring after it, the caddy lifts the bag on to his shoulder, and both set off after the ball. Two seconds of animation, and the scene cuts to the next view, ready for the follow-up shots.

CRITICISM

'Golf – another boring game to review, I thought. NO! I was wrong. This one is very enjoyable. I was flabbergasted to be able to see the whole course, and very impressive it is too, with detailed different types of trees, hedges, bushes, rough, bunkers, rivers, ponds, bridges, even the clubhouse, and not forgetting the player and his caddy. Both are very well animated, even to the swing and the tense wait for the ball to land. Good close-ups are given when you are on the green. This is the best golfing game I have seen. Everything is so realistic, and the excellent graphics are quickly displayed. There are even amusing remarks from the computer to cheer you up! A game that I really enjoyed playing, and that I can recommend to anyone who wants a golfing game.'

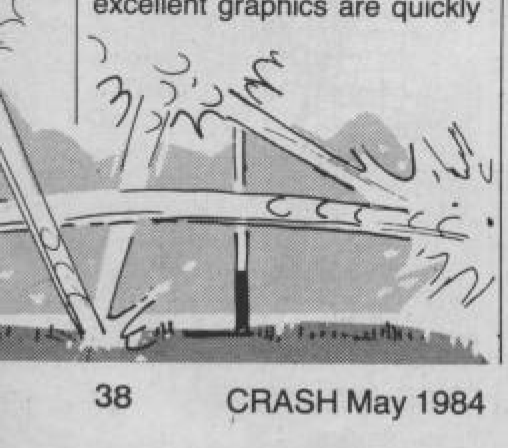
'This is the best golf game I hve ever seen, with plenty of details, scenic fairways, and it is very playable. Unbelievably the game is in BASIC, but because it's so good, who cares? A very good feature is that for even a player with no knowledge of golf or what clubs do, the game is simple because everything is explained on screen. Excellent colour and fantastic graphics.'

'At the end of a tiring round, it's really nice to see "yourself" part company with the caddy and walk wearily into the club house for a welcoming beer – or something. The only detail that C.R.L. seem to have left out is the tipping of the caddy (or perhaps that isn't done in the best of clubs!). This game is so well thought out and displayed that it looks like a television golf championship right down to the editing of the scenes. Wonderful, and satisfying to play.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6 and 7 F and S, very simple and logical, and all prompted on screen
Joystick: no point
Keyboard play: very easy
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: very good
Sound: very little, just the peace and quite of a well-kept course
Skill levels: 1
General rating: an excellent simulation, one of the best golf games around, highly recommended

Use of computer	78%
Graphics	80%
Playability	84%
Getting started	73%
Addictive qualities	84%
Value for money	87%
Overall	**81%**

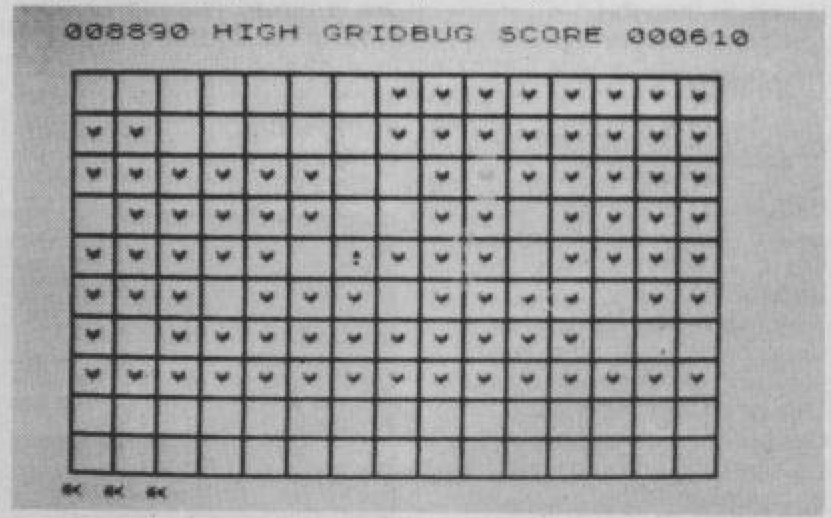


GRID-BUG

Producer: **C.C.I.**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Program: **Elfin Software**

In *Grid-Bug* you must guide a hero bug across square or along the grid surrounding them, eating the strawberries in the squares. If you cross an empty square, you leave a strawberry behind, which must be eaten. On the grid there are spiders which eat bugs, and at least one which runs across the squares. When a screen has been cleared of strawberries (170 of them) the next screen contains more spiders.

The trick is to clear the squares, using the grids to move between empty squares so that you don't leave more strawberries behind. That's it.



Strawberry Fields forever, but keep the spiders at bay.

CRITICISM

'The game is fun to play and is addictive. The graphics are fairly simple, but sheer playability makes up for this.'

'This is a grid game with a novel difference. The object is to collect strawberries placed in the grid squares, whilst avoiding the spiders, and that's all there is to it. An original game, perhaps for the younger players, although all the same, it's not worth buying.'

'The main problem with *Grid-Bug* is that it doesn't really contain enough to be interesting after a few minutes play. It does manage to be quite difficult, especially on the later screens when there are a lot of spiders out to get you, but it doesn't add up to being very playable and therefore not very addictive. The graphics are small and the use of colour isn't very exciting either.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, C/B left/right
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: basic
Graphics: block, small and undetailed
Sound: average
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 5
General rating: mixed opinions from poor to good.

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	55%
Playability	58%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities:	57%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**58%**

Star Warrior

Producer: **Visions**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **John Edwards**

It would be true to say that the prime objective in this game is to stay alive – not an easy task. Three interdependent screens make up the action.

In the first, you are in your space craft at the bottom of the screen and you must shoot all the alien craft which travel down the vertically wrapped around screen dropping

showers and showers of pixel sized bombs at you. Vertical movement to about half the screen height is allowed and your craft may wrap around horizontally.

In the second screen you start at the top and must land the space craft at the bottom, navigating through a dense shower of asteroids which move in various directions.

On landing you proceed immediately to the third screen. Your ship is landed at the top left and there is an entrance to the underground maze in the centre. The main problem is the cyborg which follows your every move, firing continuously. At the bottom of the caverns a crystal is located which will refuel you ship so it can take off again, but getting down there and collecting it, and getting back safely is an extremely tough task.

With all three screens completed the game repeats with different aliens and a much more intelligent cyborg.

CRITICISM

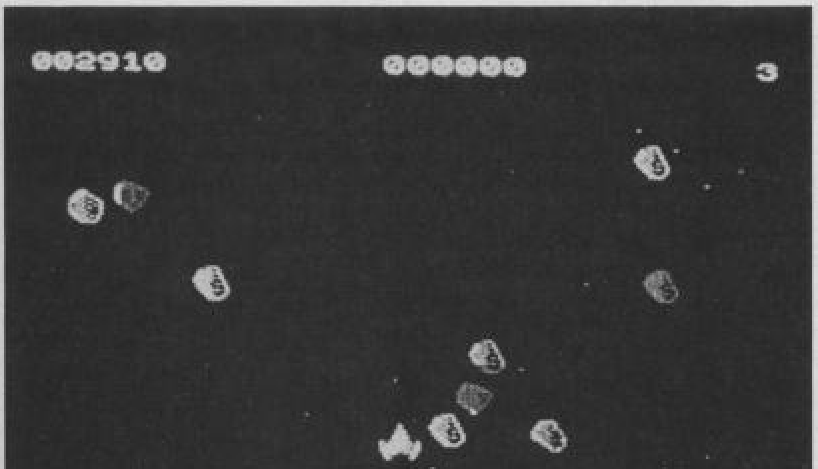
'Each alien protects the other on the first screen of this game. It has great graphics with scrolling star background, good explosions with sound and is very addictive. The one drawback might be the tiny bomb showers which can only be seen close up to the screen. Otherwise the best game from Visions. Recommended!'

'The wrap around screen can be quite useful for avoiding stray bombs on the first stage. In the second, the longer you stay on it, the less points you get. The third board is the worst because the graphics of the maze are poor and the cyborg is impossible to get past. A good concept, a pity about the graphics and keyboard layout.'

'*Star Warrior* is an unusual looking game, apparently simple graphics turn out to be quite complex, with shifting colours and fast movement. The aliens explode satisfyingly; you explode wonderfully. Getting past the cyborg is very difficult and requires careful timing and the use of the wrap around screen to draw the beast away from the entrance for a second. Fortunately the fact that you can get in seems to drive it into a mindless frenzy for a moment – your only saving grace. A quite original game, tough and addictive in playing.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 left/right, O=fire, M/K=up/down, K=thrust as well
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: highly responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: fast, smooth and very detailed, generally good
Sound: reasonable although very low key
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 3 and 5 different alien levels
General rating: above average to good.



Multi-coloured asteroids throng the skies as *Star Warrior* descends to meet the cyborg.

Use of computer	61%
Graphics	75%
Playability	73%
Getting started	66%
Addictive qualities	74%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**68%**

ED-ON

Producer: **C.C.I.**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.00**
Language: **machine code**

Based on an old arcade game, *Ed-On* presents you with a series of concentric squares, representing four 'streets' with four compass point crossovers. The streets are lined with dots, and you must drive your car around in one direction, collecting all the dots. The computer controls another vehicle, which travels in the opposite direction and which you must avoid. At points in the game flags appear and add bonus points if collected. On clearing a screen you then face the task over again with two enemy cars, and so on.

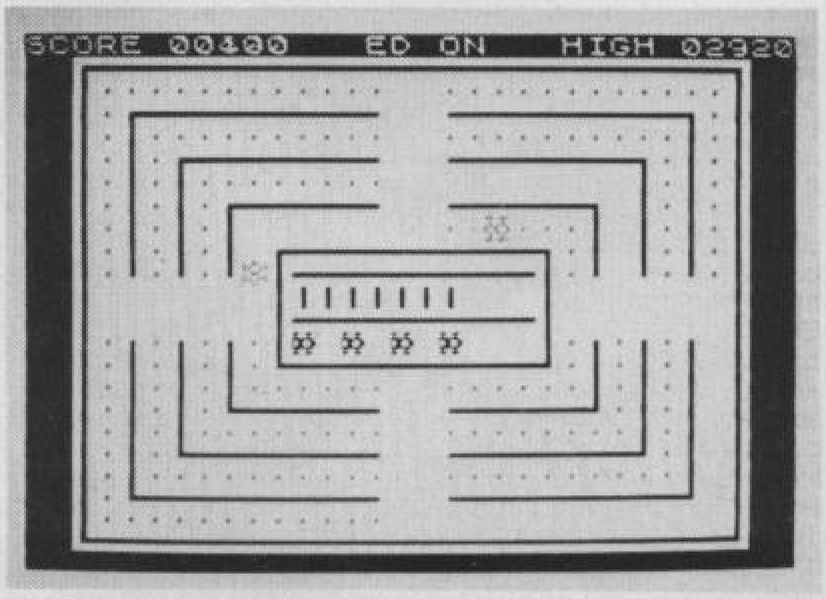
The four directional keys allow you to speed up or slow down, as well as change lanes to avoid the enemy cars. In the centre box your lives appear as well as a simple bar indicator for speed. The enemy cars have a fixed speed of travel, and change lanes whenever they feel like it.

CRITICISM

'The enemy cars tend to home in on your lane, which makes the game very fast and fairly challenging, especially when there are two or more cars in play. The graphics are simple and it ends up being just another average game.'

'Once loaded, there are a good set of instructions. The idea is simple but it is a quite difficult game to play as the computer-controlled cars seem very intelligent. The biggest disadvantage of this game is that the keys are dual-purpose, that is, they can be used to increase or decrease your speed as well as move the car up/down or left/right. This does tend to get confusing. Not a very interesting game on the whole but it might appeal to some.'

'*Ed-On* is very similar to **Arcade's** first game, *Gridrun*, with the addition of acceleration and braking. The graphics are small and the use of colour is pretty drab. A simple idea and quite hard to play but it doesn't get very far and palls quite quickly.'

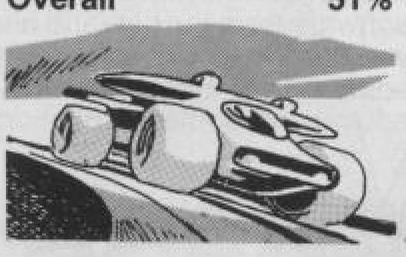


Fast *Ed-on* collisions seem inevitable when you're faced with maniac drivers.

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, C/B left/right
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive although the dual-purpose takes some getting used to
Use of colour: poor
Graphics: block movement, simple and not very big
Sound: average
Skill levels: progressive
Lives: 5
General rating: fair to average, not very addictive.

Use of computer	52%
Graphics	45%
Playability	52%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qualities	48%
Value for money	50%
Overall	**51%**





YOU'VE READ ABOUT THE SOFTWARE –

NOW PLAY IT!

CRASH is the only magazine to offer you a direct link between reading about software and playing it! Forget hours of fruitless hunting in shops for that extra special game you read about and want – **and want now. CRASH Mail Order** will move stars and planets (even the 8.15pm from Paddington) to get you any of the brill (and even not-so-brill) software from the big (and even not-so-big) software houses reviewed in these pages. Because **CRASH** believes that you **reading** about software is only second best to you **playing** the real thing – and forming your own opinion. Bazoola software and meep software – don't just believe us – **see**! Order any games, adventures, utilities, simulations and educational software mentioned (and not-so-mentioned) in **CRASH** with the order form later in this issue.

CRASH – SPECTRUM SOFTWARE



RE HEAVEN AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

KERRASH! NEWS

Jet Set Willy in Multiple Deaths

We have had a number of enquiries from people asking why their *Jet Set Willy* programs have behaved oddly. In fact there is no real problem and the program has not crashed when you suddenly lose all those valuable lives at one go. Unlike *Manic Miner, Jet Set Willy is more of an arcade adventure with random elements built in, objects and hazards may more around. The worst obstacle is a visit to the Attic. Your very presence there will cause a chain reaction in the Chapel. The four guardians from there will go to the Kitchen, West of Kitchen, Cuckoo's Nest and the East Wall Base, making short cuts through them impossible as you will encounter intant death when entering the rooms.*

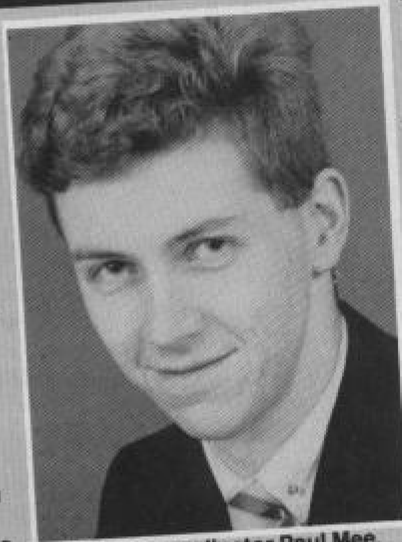


Software Projects, however, have offered an apology over the fact that the program requires reloading at the end of the game after visiting the Attic. This is due to the complexity of the game and the sheer size of the program needed to generate the 60 screens.

Software Project's **Colin Stokes**, who recently joined the company, having left Imagine, where he was Sales Manager, has had a busy time recently what with the rush over *Jet Set Willy*. Now he has had to look into *Thrusta* and *Push Off*, both advertised as 16K games. It would appear that they *were* 16K except that somewhere an odd byte has crept in and made it impossible to load either game into a 16K Spectrum. The CRASH technical department lowered RAMTOP on one of our 48K Spectrums to simulate a 16K Spectrum and tried loading, without luck. Colin Stokes was very prompt in ringing back to say that it appeared to be the case, and that Software Projects would be changing the cassette inlays as soon as possible. Of course this has only been a problem for 16K Spectrum owners.


Colin Stokes

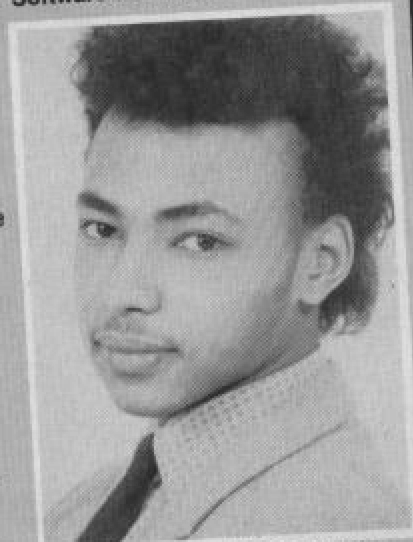
Dreamers on the Increase


Software co-ordinator Paul Mee.

CRL, who call themselves 'The Dream Makers,' have just put two new in-house programmers to work. **Paul Mee**, who previously worked for an educational software house, joined the company to become the Software Development Manager in charge of the whole programming department. He began his career in computers with Hewlett Packard and has a good working knowledge of both high- and low-level languages. His function at CRL will be the co-ordination and development of new software products.

'CRL is a forward-looking company which, in the space of 12 months, has become one of the leading companies in its field,' said Paul. Let's hope that Paul can look forward enough to firmly discourage the likes of *Caveman* and *Lunar Rescue* and encourage games like *Omega Run*. In that way the public, too, may believe that CRL is indeed a leader in its field.

The other new employee is **Peter Jobate**, a self-taught machine code programmer who has had programs published in books and magazines. Peter's first new program for CRL will be released shortly. The new additions bring CRL's total number of full-time programmers to six.


Peter Jobate – new programmer

Person of the Year

Awards within the computer industry are now really getting under way, and the only big question left to be answered is: When will we be seeing the Golden Joystick Awards presentation ceremony televised from some grand showcase centre in London? Will we see Esther Rantzen trying to elicit some gems from Matthew Smith for picking up the Best Jumper award, Seb Coe shaking paws with the Piman for winning at Olympimania or Terry Wogan congratulating Chris Urquhart for having backed the best hunch in history?

But while plans for next year's great event go ahead, the CTA (Computer Trade Association) has voted **Rod Cousens** of Quicksilva 'Person of the Year.' Rod received the award primarily because of his work in promoting the UK software industry. In his capacity as vice-chairman of GOSH (Guild of Software Houses), Rod has been active throughout 1983 in his efforts to fight tape piracy and protect consumers' interests. On a more serious note, judging by our picture of Rod from the last issue, it looks as though he's also aiming to pick up the award next year for 'Best Dressed Person of the Year.'




Rod Cousens

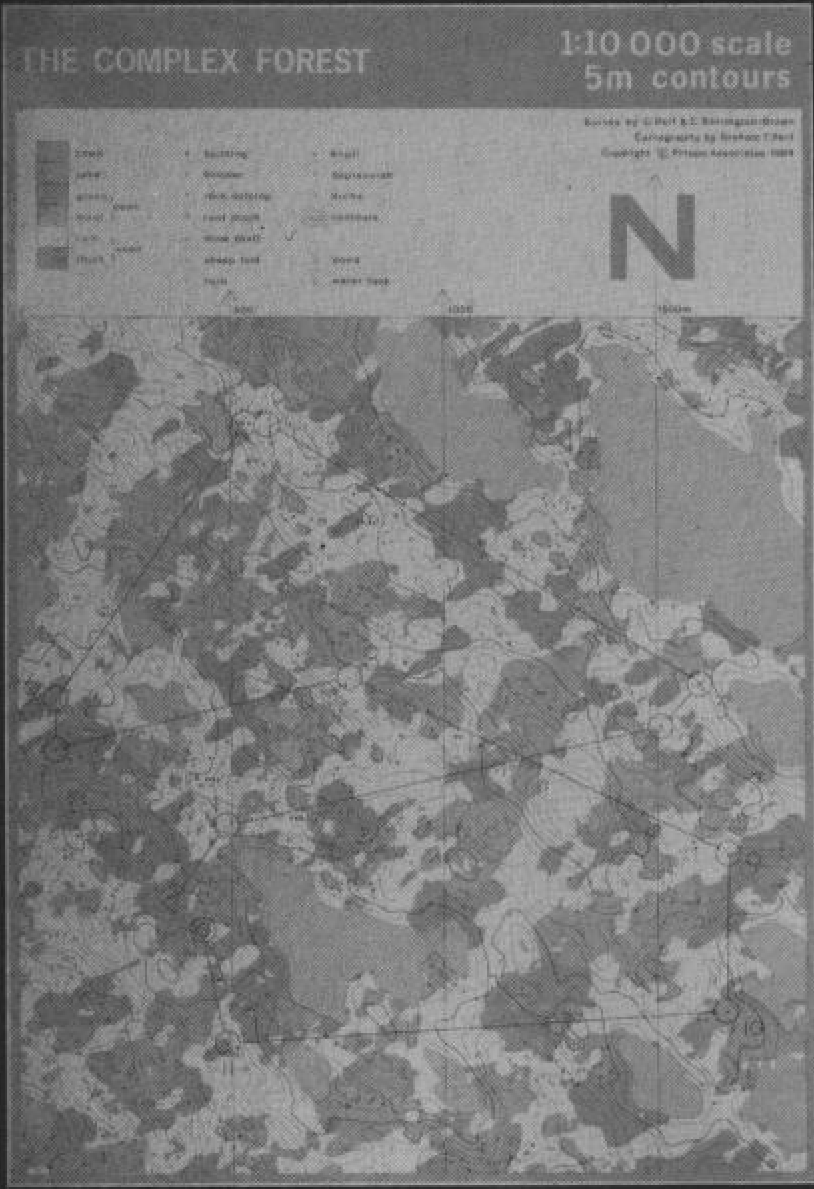
NEWS

More Forest

If you have been wandering (or even orienteering) around **Phipps Associates's Forest**, you may have wandered off the edge of mapped territory or even wondered about the beyond. Now a detailed map is available for the much more complex forest which lies somewhere in the program. The new territory is as different from the first as chalk is from cheese. Giant fjords and lakes have appeared and steep-sided valleys, and even a small wooded island in the middle of the largest lake. This scenery is more like that found in Scandinavia, the home of the sport of orienteering. Like *The Forest* map, the Complex Forest map is a 1:10000 scale with 5m contours and has a 12-point orienteering course ready marked.

An amazing fact about the program *The Forest* is that 5,600 square kilometeres of territory have been fitted into the 48K memory. The existing Forest map, which comes with the program, covers only two square kilometers. Similarly, the newly published map of the complex forest covers another two square kilometres. So there's still plenty left for the intrepid explorer to do – and, who knows, maybe there's some forgotten tribe lost somewhere in those blank kilometres!

The new map is available only by mail order from **Phipps Associates, 172 Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey: 01-393 0283**, and costs 85 pence. *The Forest* program and basic map costs £9.95 from computer shops anywhere and CRASH Mail Order.



Different as chalk from cheese – the new Complex Forest map.

Game Keeper for the Autumn

The Game Keeper, Birmingham's largest computer software stockist, has decided to pull out of the hardware market and restrict itself to software and accessories. The reason given for this decision is the totally inadedquate supply of computers from manufacturers in Britain, making it financially not worth while to sell major lines. In a sharp rebuke, **Tony Noble**, Game Keeper's managing director, says, 'It is ironic that in a time when Clive Sinclair is announcing to the Press that computer dealers are unable to deal with volume sales that The Game Keeper has had to stop selling computers because companies like Sinclair have supplied zero stock this year. The Game Keeper needs to obtain units in excess of 500 computers a week from manufacturers and the manufacturers are totally unable to supply in such volume.'

The Game Keeper has three shops in Birmingham and one in Coventry. Now they are planning to open a network of software specialist outlets stocking games for Spectrum, Commodore and BBC computers. At the same time some 15 freelance writers are preparing new software titles for various macines to be released in the autumn under The Game Keeper software title.

Stonked Out

Further along the Mersey **Imagine** seem to have still been having trouble with their game *Stonkers*, which crashes after a few minutes' play. This was said to be a fault on some of the first batch back from duplication, but later batches still suffered with the problem. Imagine have told us that the hitch has been put right, but, once again, our last batch of tapes still seemed reluctant to Stonk for more than a few minutes. Imagine will, of course, replace any faulty tapes, so if you are having problems we suggest you send them back. Obviously lots of games are working fine, however, as *Stonkers* now stands at 28 in the CRASH HOTLINE.

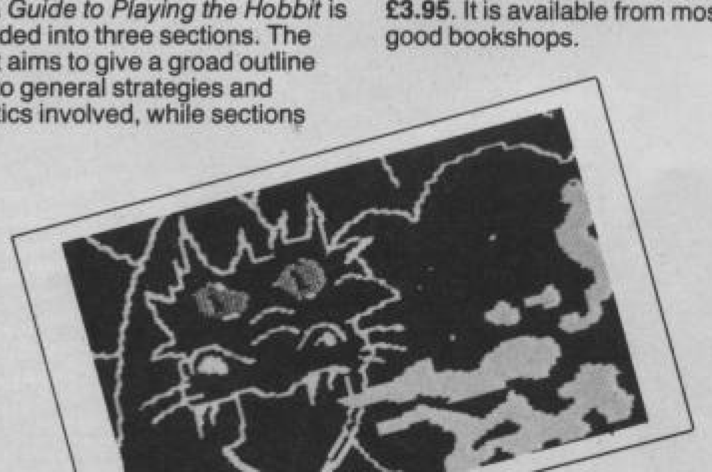
Playing the Game

For all adventurers who prefer to remain in Tolkien's Middle Earth rather than come up to the late nineteenth century of *Sherlock Homes* or the early twentieth of *Mugsy*, *Melbourne House* have published a new book called A Guide to Playing the Hobbit.

The Hobbit, winner of the Golden Joystick Award for Strategy Game of the Year 1983, is still regarded by thousands as one of the best ever adventures, but the complexities of the game have baffled as many. Now with this book, claim Melbourne House, anyone from beginner to advanced adventurer will be able to improve their understanding of the game.

A Guide to Playing the Hobbit is divided into three sections. The first aims to give a groad outline as to general strategies and tactics involved, while sections two and three give an increasing amount of guidance offering moe detailed solutions to problems the player may encounter. The book has been written in such a way, however, that it should not spoil the fun and challenge of the adventure. It does not supply the solution to *The Hobbit* – is only offers one of many possibilities.

A Guide to Playing the Hobbit is written by **David Elkan** and costs **£3.95**. It is available from most good bookshops.





Splat Mats

Incentive Software Ltd have come up with the ideal peripheral for your Spectrum – something on which to stand that glass of beer, Coke or mug of tea. It's a '**Splat Mat.**' For owners of the game *Splat!* the device printed on the centre of the beer mat will be familiar. For those sadly uninitiated Splatterites, it probably just looks like the thing it's supposed to stop!

Splat Mats are available from Incentive Software at 54 London Street, Reading RG1 4SQ, and they're free on request with a stamped addressed envelope.

NEWS

Spectrum for Cablevision



The Gamestar subscriber package includes Spectrum (48K), black box and joystick. By courtesy of British Telecom.

Cable Interactive Services (CIS), a division of **British Telecome**, has won the first contract to supply TV video games to a UK cable operator. The contract is with **Rediffusion** and is for the **CIS Gamestar service**. Up to one million homes on Rediffusion networks throughout the country will be able to access Gamestar, starting this summer.

Customers subscribe to Gamestar and receive a home terminal allowing them to load telesoftware down a cable and have any number of plays of a game. The cost is £9.95 a month and for this you receive hardware consisting of a 48K Spectrum with an add-on box providing joystick facilities. The black box, with its Gamestar logo, sits neatly underneath the Spectrum, connects to the computer and interfaces with the cable system. It contains an amplified speaker, to get around the Spectrum's abysmal lack of sound. A joystick will be included as standard. The black box contains enough memory to offer a 'welcome' when switched on and download a menu of games on offer.

Gamestar will offer a mix of up to 20 games, ranging from arcade through to adventure and educational games, and it will be replacing five every month. Most games are envisaged as being supplied by established existing software houses, although there will be scope for new software, especially as the system grows. At any time, of couse, the Spectrum may be used in the normal way for playing games or computing.

In addition to the service, subscribers will also receive a monthly newsletter magazine giving details of current and forthcoming programs as well as offering subscribers the opportunity to air their views on the games. Areas likely to be able to receive the Gamestar service are: Bargoed/Penybryn, Barrow, Basildon, Brighton/Hove, Bristol, Burnley, Darlington, Deal, Dover, Exeter, Folkestone, Grimsby, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Portadawe, Reading, Rhondda, Rotherham, Southampton, South Tyneside, Stockton (including Billingham), Stoke-on-Trent, Swansea; additions: Hartlepool, Hull, Lancaster/Kendal, Maidstone, Mansfield, Newbridge, Newport, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Norwich, Wirral MBC, Wolverhampton, Worcester.

New Interface

Ram Electronics, the games hardware specialists, have added the **Ram Turbo** multi-purpose interface to its range of Spectrum compatible products. The object of the new interface, which plugs straight into any Spectrum, is to provide the user with a wide variety of interfaces. While tape software remains an option, games players may now take advantage of ROM cartridge software and connect the Microdrive and other peripherals via the full expansion port at the rear of the unit. Kempston and Protek protocols are supported by the Ram Turbo as well as the rapid fire Quickshot II.

A built-in safety device stops the user from causing expensive damage to the computer as the power cable to the Spectrum can only be connected after the interface is in place.

Ram Electronic's technical director, **Martin Shoebridge**, says, 'Technically it's miles ahead of any competitiors, but it may be the 24-hour despatch that turns out to be its biggest selling point.'

The Ram Turbo costs £22.95 on mail order plus £1 for postage and packing (£3 pp for overseas), and is available from Ram Electronics (Fleet) Ltd, 106 Fleet Road, Fleet, Hants.

Chris Joins Ocean



Chris Urquhart – an ambition fulfilled.

Seventeen-year-old **Christian Urquhart**, who co-wrote Ocean's very successful game *Transversion*, has now joined Ocean's team of in-house programmers in Manchester. Chris was first byten by the computer bug when he set eyes on an IBM mini-computer in 1976.

Says Chris nostalgically, 'It was in Abu Dhabi – my dad was working there at the time, and he arranged for me to see it in action.'

Ever since then he has dreamt of becoming a programmer. But his first real introduction to computer games came through his friend **Nick Pierpoint**. They live opposite each other in Wallasey on Merseyside, but during term-time Chris was away at boarding school in Wales. During the school holidays Nick demonstrated his new 48K Spectrum to Chris, and, impressed by what he saw, Chris decided to teach himself programming.

Together they decided to write a game as a programming exercise. The 'exercise' was *Transversion*, and they concluded it wasn't too bad for a first attempt.

Encouraged by friends, who said it was just as good as games already on the market, Chris and Nick approached Ocean Software. 'We did telephone some other software houses, but they suggested sending in the game, whereas John Woods of Ocean invited us to come in and see him on a Saturday,' Nick remembers. **John Woods** and **David Ward** of Ocean both liked the game, a few minor alterations were suggested and the game was accepted for publication. It was subsequently given a 'highly recommended' rating in the first issue of CRASH.

Delighted with this success, Chris and Nick decided to embark on a second adventure. Ocean equipped Nick was some hardware, and he continued his program writing at school in his spare time. At weekends they would visit Ocean to discuss progress, and to use some of the in-house programmers' equipment. Chris claims, 'Nick is very much an ideas person and good at design – I prefer logic and enjoy making ideas work.'

Their latest release is *Eskimo Eddie*, a version of the arcade original 'Pengo,' and unusual because it features two entirely different screens (see review in this issue), unlike most other Spectrum versions. *Eskimo Eddie* is likely to prove a success, and will make Chris a hat-trick because he was also the author of *Hunchback* for Spectrum, which has done very well in the charts despite a less than rave review from CRASH, something Chris wasn't slow to point out!

Chris wanted to leave school and concentrate full time on programming. He convinced his parents that he really wanted a programming career. Ocean offered him the chance on the understanding that his parents were agreeable.

With one ambition already



SEIDDAB EXPANSION ***************

Creators of the infernal Seiddab, **Hewson Consultants**, have just moved into new premises in Abingdon. It hs 2,000 square feet, space enough for offices, show room and warehousing. The move has enabled them to install and run a large duplication facility. But as importantly, it will now allow them to double their staff. Already they are recruiting two in-house programmers for games finishing and conversion. The company's growth has also been helped by the writing talents of **Andrew Hewson** whose book (written in conjunction with John Hardman) *40 Best Machine Code Routines for the ZX Spectrum*, recently won the CTA award for the best book published in 1983.



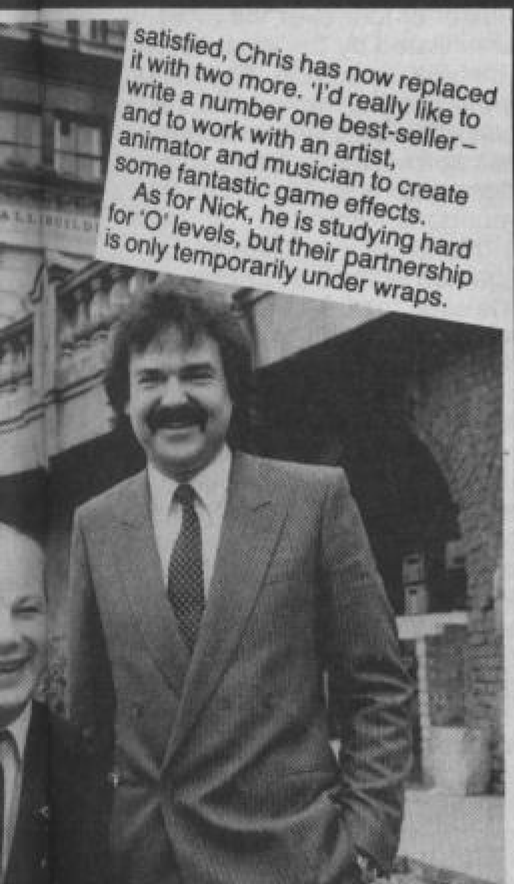
Andrew Braybrook and Steve Turner – the Seiddabs in person.



Andrew Hewson

satisfied, Chris has now replaced it with two more. 'I'd really like to write a number one best-seller – and to work with an artist, animator and musician to create some fantastic game effects.

As for Nick, he is studying hard for 'O' levels, but their partnership is only temporarily under wraps.



David Ward and John Woods of Ocean

TO THE STARS!

Birmingham, generally lagging behind Manchester and Liverpool for games programming, is now making a sterling effort to catch up. Brand new company **Gargoyle Games**, has launched its first game for the 48K Spectrum. It's called *Ad Astra* (to the stars), and is a 3D shoot em up like you've never seen before. The 3D perspective view is quite astonishing – see the review in this issue.

Programs authors **Greg Follis** and **Roy Carter** have a background not only in programming, but also in art, and the graphics quality of the new game certainly points to their artistic abilities. They are now working hard on the second release which has a tentative title of *Arabesque*, but says Greg, this will probably be changed before the game is available. It will be an arcade style adventure and features a warrior sixty-four pixels high. The game employs full film techniques to achieve the animation effects, techniques which can also be seen to good effect in *Ad Astra*.



COMPUTER GAMES ON VIDEO

It was the psychedelic communications guru of the late Sixties/early Seventies, **Marshall McLuhan**, who proclaimed the book and written word dead in favour of television. He was probably aware that the central weakness of his argument was the fact that all his arguments were presented in books! Twenty years later books and magazines are still the primary source of knowledge, especially in specialist fields like computers. We have, of course, seen magazines presented as computer programs, sold in cassette form, but to date television as such has been remarkably uninterested in computer games. **Central Television**'s *Magic Micro Mission* was the first programme which actually examined the phenomenon, but now **Yorkshire TV** have announced that they are soon recording a series called *The Game*, which will be screened locally, and then, if it proves successful, will be networked later. *The Game* is not a programme about computer games but is in itself a computer game using a live TV audience, guest celebrities and a clever mix of video and computer game techniques.

At the time of writing, Yorkshire TV are seeking adventure, arcade and strategy game players of all ages within the Yorkshire area. Auditions are being held to see whether the entrants are up to scratch, and the really nimble fingered ones will eventually go into the studio to record the programmes.

Another departure is *TV Choice*'s new video cassette, *The World's Greatest Computer Games.* Claimed to be the first-ever British video devoted to computer games software, the video is 30 minutes long and puts together, 'a collection of the highest quality and most mind-boggling computer games, shows you how to play them and highlights their imaginative features.'

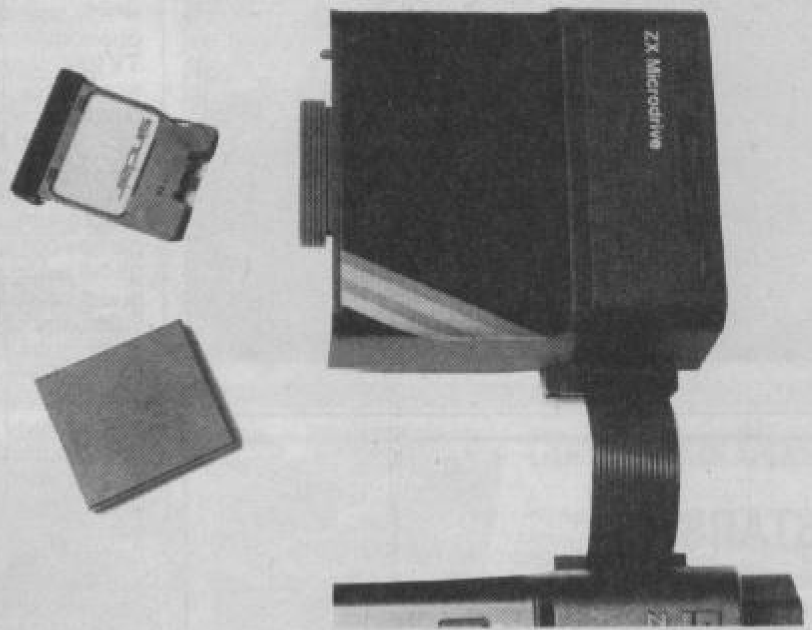
Twenty-one games are featured, with **Chris Tarrant**, of Tiswas, OTT and TVam fame, hosting the programme. The tape starts and ends with advertisements from some of the major companies in the business, and covers games for the Commodore 64, Oric Atmos, BBC, Atari computer and VCS, and the ZX Spectrum, which Mr Tarrant refers to rather quaintly as the 'Zed-ex.' Among the Spectrum games, well-known progams like *Valhalla, Black Crystal* and *Jet Set Willy* **are featured**.

Executive producer **Norman Thomas** says, 'While there are some very good games around, the vast majority of the products at the moment on the market are absolute rubbish. This video will direct the consumer to the best games they can buy. It will allow them to sample the games before they part with their money.'

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Epicventuring and Multiplayer

After the big hoo-haa of its introduction last autumn very little has been heard of the Microdrive and its ZX interface 1. Either the Spectrum owners who have ordered this unit are waiting in stoic silence for the 'high-speed' random access (or random delivery?) unit to drop through the letterbox or they already are in possession of the very same and are treating it with the same interest and enthusiasm befitting the old and dusty ZX81 hanging above the fireplace.



Either way, it does appear rather odd that neither Press nor software houses are not frantically buzzing with news of application programs benefiting from the excellent specifications of the machine. The 'Spot the first Microdrive cartridge-based games software advertisement' competition has yet, to my knowledge, to be won. Considering the usual gargantuan delay between ads and the availability of the product this really means that no Microdrive-based games software is to appear before summertime . . .

Having just received by miracle a rare species by the name of Microdrive on loan from the very source and creator of ZX wonders (to be returned within two weeks – could this really be the one and only working unit on its Ulyssean travels to far and distant magazines?) CRASH has the opportunity to discover the untapped resources contained within the Microdrive and the ZX interface 1 and with luck avoid the temptation of launching the first Microdrive User supplement (what an original idea!).

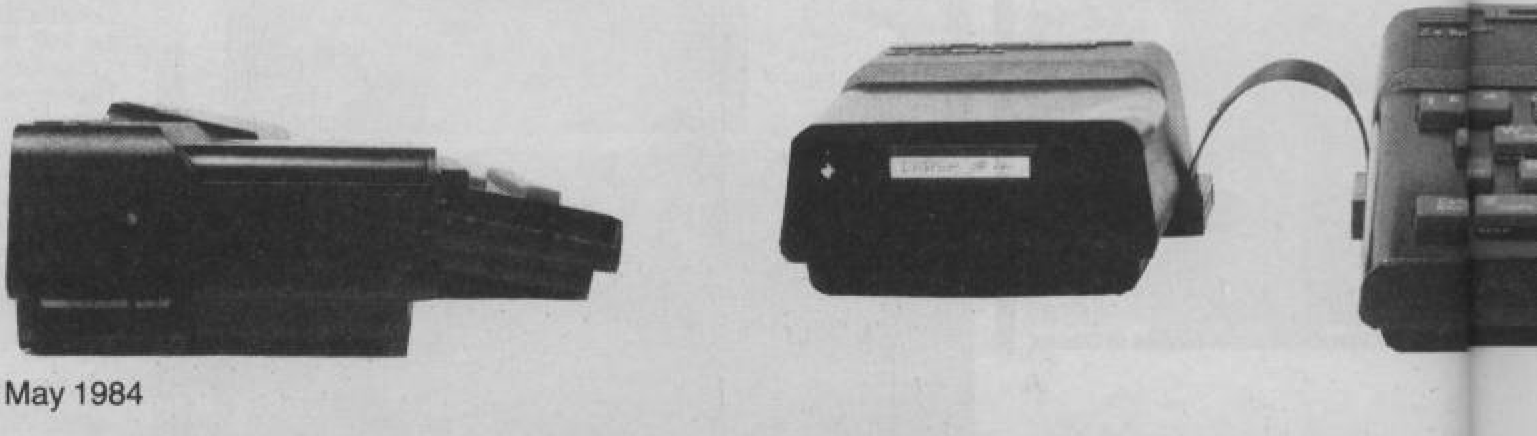
At first the main function of the ZX interface 1 becomes obvious: this unit provides the roué games player with a wonderfully tilted keyboard position and allows a far superior keyboard control for those multi-digit arcade games.

But what of the side-effects? Well, three cannily hidden benefits have been spotted and will be discussed in detail.

Megastorage

Keen programmers appreciate LOAD and SAVE wait times as being the most creative pauses in the programming process, but many games players could do without this boring interlude. The Spectrum may have improved loading times by a factor of four over the ZX81, but this is annihilated by the vast memory size of the 48K Spectrum. The Microdrive sounds like the remedy to this problem. Just download your cassette-based games software into the Microdrive cartridge and you have instant access to your games library.

But wait, this proves to be a nightmare. The games software consists of pure machine code in 95% of cases and once loaded it is practically impossible to return to Spectrum BASIC for the Microdrive save commands. The idea proves to be impossible unless you are a whizz kid and can interrupt and disassemble the game's machine code, locate the start position in memory and download the dissected code into Microdrive data files. You will then still have problems with autostart and possibly you may even have to relocate code which may have been originally in the Microdrive systems variable and MAPs area of the memory. Obviously the Microdrive is not the solution to this problem.



Networking

We take a look at the fabled, legendary Microdrive

There is however another advantage. The cartridge tape conains a minimum of 85K bytes and whizzes round in less than eight seconds. Given the fact that the operating system has to locate the file to be loaded, the average access time may vary from one to eight seconds depending on the position and length of the file on tape. Compared to an average load time of four minutes for a 25K games program on cassette, the Microdrive constitutes a 30-fold reduction of wait time and you can wave goobye to the usual tea-break at this point. The Microdrive is a random access storage system – forget about rewinding and locating program starts. The cartridge contains an endless loop of tape and the operating system, which is an extension of the Sinclair BASIC, will control the Microdrive and will guarantee a complete revolution of the cartridge tape for every access. During this revolution it will look for the file selected or for the clear tape area required for the load or save function and perform the LOAD or SAVE automatically. Once completed, it will have positioned the tape ready for the next access.

This really opens up new country for epicventures. Imagine popular adventures such as *The Hobbit* or *Valhalla*, then extend the number of loations by a factor of say 10 or 20 and you will soon see that your chance of getting lost forever in adventureland increases alarmingly . . .

The principle with which this can be achieved is similar to the exciting paperback adventure *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* from **Penguin**. Your choice of action will dictate which page number you will have to continue on and similarly the same applies with the Microdrive. Substitute the page number with data files and depending on your action in combination with various other conditions, such as objects carried, energy level, past history, etc, the program will load the appropriate data files, which can contain new locations, new characters or new conditions.

If the idea of such a mammoth adventure scares you, just think of the poor programmer, who is now faced with the agony of writing machine code programs in excess of 100Kbytes. No doubt adventure games writers are at this very moment labouring away frantically at their first microdrive epics and we will see some results in the near future. The key to a successful approach will not only lie in the quantity of locations, but in the intricacy of the path of actions and events which should hide the in-built linearity and limitation of access to the various data bases. In other words, the epic should not result in a series of self-contained subadventures, but should appear as a smoothly flowing saga.

LOCAL NETWORKING

A great many people consider the computer to be a deadly social enemy which can turn the entire population into bleary-eyed non-communicating morons living within the confined of their own computer system. A network system goes a long way towards bringing people back to contact with each other by allowing one anti-social computer user to communicate with another. It helps them to play friendly chess matches over long distance without coming to blows with each other or to play 'Battleships' without being able to peek at the opponent's secret ship positions. It also allows the sharing of expensive data bases and up-to-date news items.

The X Interface 1 in conjunction with the extended BASIC sets up a local area network, and by local this really means a user-group within the confines of a room. Now obviously this limits the range of applications. Chess and other board games may well be played in their original version without the computer at this close range: you would hardly think of communicating with another person in the same room via telephone when the person can be approached directly.

This really only leaves multi-player simulation games as a useful application, where each screen simulates the cockpit or battle-station of the individual player, the computer providing the realistic backdrop of the game. **Protek** here are showing an enterprising spirit with their two-player version of *Hunter Killer*. Obviously the network will prove useful for school classes where the teacher may set up a local network with the pupils. Apart from downloading Master programs he will be able to hold conversions through the din of the classroom. . . .

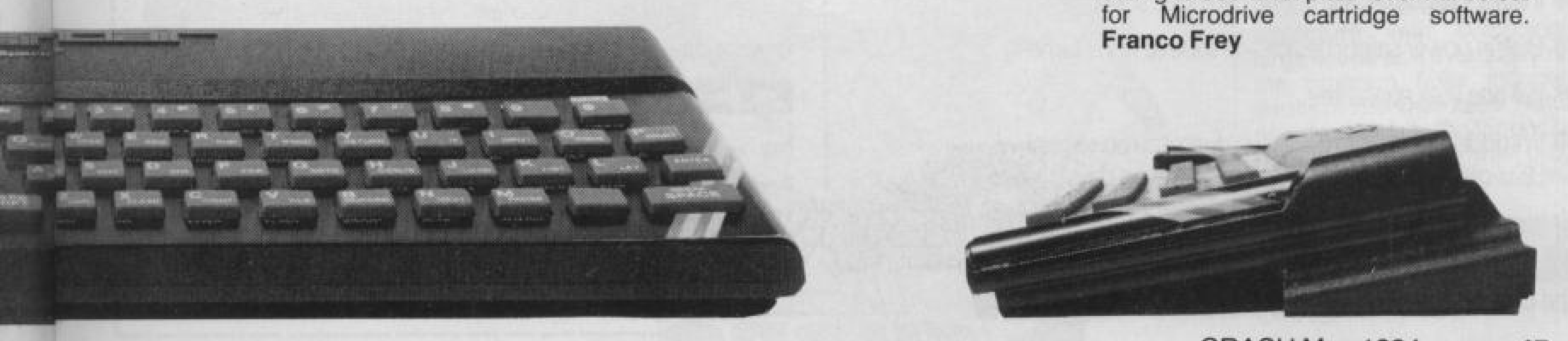
SERIAL TRANSMISSION

Another communications option is the serial interface RS232. This proves useful for connecting up peripherals such as printers, plotters and modems. If your Sinclair printer has developed dislexia and prins out garbled and random pixel messages, doesn't feed the paper and saves paper cost by printing listings all on the same line, then you might consider upgrading your print-outs by purchasing an inexpensive dot matrix or letter quality daisywheel printer. The interface provides two channels. The text channel 't' is used to send the text or listing to the printer. The binary channel 'b' will transmit binary control codes to the printer for double width, double strike, condensed italic printing, etc. Any standard baud rate between 50 and 19,200 may be set up, so this should accommodate any peripheral.

A V21 modem may be connected up to the serial interface and access gained to remote computer owners via normal telephone lines. The modem converts the serial data stream into a phone line compatible frequency shift signal. An audio coupler may be used so that the transmission can occur through the speaker and mouthpiece of a conventional phone. The Spectrum can also be hooked up to another computer with a serial interface. A good knowledge of both systems and necessary protocols is required.

EPIC LOGUE

Certainly the most exciting aspect of the ZX interface 1 is the cheap and fast microdrive storage systems, which opens up a whole new world of adventure and possibly arcade games. It will be interesting to see what price level will be set for Microdrive cartridge software.
Franco Frey



Dripping gold



Quilled Adventures



The Quill

Producer: **Gilsoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£14.95**
Language: **machine code**

Utility reviews tend to be written by people who know what they are talking about, the sort of technical wizard who can tell you where RAMTOP starts and RAMBOTTOM ends, and what to do with your UDGs in between. This makes a lot of sense in almost every case, even in this particular case, as long as the reader likes to know what makes a utility tick. But **Gilsoft's** *The Quill* program is really far more fundamental than the average utility. The very choice of its name is indicative of its use. It is a writing utility, very much the pen and ink to the adventurer's paper. Consequently, the success of this utility depends much less on knowing how and why it works than the fact that it does, so in this case a review written by someone who wouldn't know a RAM from a TOP makes some sense.

What is essential to using *The Quill* is care, concentration and a developed sense of logic. To a person who has had even minimal experience of Spectrum BASIC, i.e. that gained from the cursory glance through the computer's manual, the language used by this editor makes immediate sense; morever, it makes sense in a straightforward way. The result is a utility which will allow anyone to write an adventure with surprisingly large scope and eventually run the program quite independently of *The Quill* itself. Naturally, this leads to the thought of perhaps marketing that program, and Gilsoft have no objec-



tion to that as long as you give them a credit in the program.

The Quill is accompanied by a comprehensive booklet, in as much as it takes you through the stages of constructing a small adventure based on six locations. Despite its size, this is sufficient to get across some quite sophisticated ideas, although as soon as you start to try and write your own, you will no doubt come across some problems not answered easily in the first part of the manual.

In brief, after loading is complete you are presented with a large menu, the important options as far as this review is concerned are:

Vocabulary
Message text
Location text
Movement table
Object table
Object start location
Event table
Status table
Test adventure
Bytes spare
Objects conveyable
Permanent colours
Return to BASIC

A lot of the options are instantly obvious, but the important functions are also far from clear. **Vocabulary** takes you to a sub-menu and allows you to insert all the words you will want the computer to understand. Each word is given a number. Words may be entered, deleted or the entire list printed on screen for checking, or synonyms of a word printed if they exist in the vocabulary already. The program comes with the most important adventure words already in the vocabulary, like North, South, etc.

Location text is another sub-menu. Your first action is to Amend a text since *The Quill* comes with loation Ø (everything is numbered from zero) already written in. Selecting A brings it to view, where it may be deleted and rewritten to suit your adventure. From then on pressing Insert results in a line at the top saying, 'Location 1,' etc. When all the texts are written and entered, the **Object Text** may be selected. This lists all the objects which may be manipulated in the adventure and gives them an object number. They must be in the vocabulary, of course. **Object Start Location** is self-evident. Every numbered object must now be entered so that it already exists in the location in which it will first be found. This is done in the form of '3 4' (obj 3 whatever it may be in location 4, whatever that is). Objects such as keys hidden in drawers are entered as 'not created.' Similarly objects worn or carried have a special code to denote this fact.

The **Movement table** is very important. Here the directions which may be taken from any location to any other location are entered. Again, using this part of the editor is simplicity itself and only requires some careful thought in terms of the actual game rather than the program. If from location 1 you can go north to location 2 and west to location 6 this would be entered as **1 N 2 W 6.**

The heart of the editor is the **Event table,** and it is here that the most complex work is undertaken. This controls the inventory and recall or redescribe functions; here you may set up conditions that will allow objects to be picked up, opened, closed, switched on or off, and inhbitions may be placed in the database which only allow certain actions to take place at specific times and/or locations. One of the great flexibilities of *The Quill* comes with the flag system used in the Event table. Flags can be set up to inform the computer that particular actions have taken place or not and can be used for scoring, inhibiting actions until conditions are correct, making rooms light or dark if certain conditions are not met, causing messages to appear, and so on.

Messages are created in the **Message text**, like *'I'm hungry,' 'I'm dying of starvation,' 'I'm dead!'* The messages are entered and numbered so that they can be called up when required.

At all points the adventure may be tested to check that things are happening as they should. When they do not, you begin to realise another point in the logic of using *The Quill* – the order in which entries relating to an action are made in the **Event table.**

It would take up far too much space to go into any further detail here, and the booklet accompanying the program is very good despite a very few shortcomings which may become apparent as you go along. But **Gilsoft** are only too happy to help you out if you should get seriously stuck with a problem.

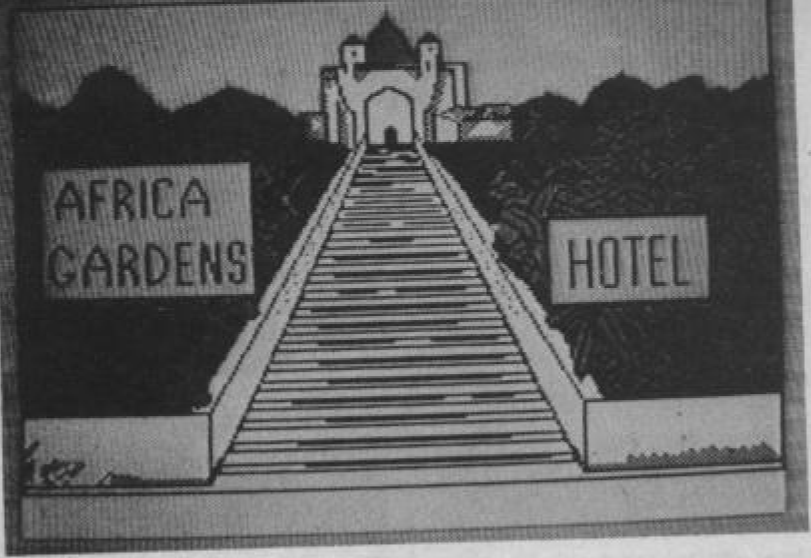
The Quill opens up a huge area of complex programming to thousands of people. It might be thought that this single program would ruin the market for the commercial software houses selling adventure games, but I don't think that is at all likely. After all, thousands, millions, of people own typewriters, but how many of them write novels? The most criticial element that you can't buy in with *The Quill* is imagination and actual writing ability of the literary kind. Even if you are not thinking of writing adventures in order to market them, *The Quill* is a massively worthwhile investment since it is one of the few programs for the Spectrum on the market which will give lasting satisfaction and arouse the creative urge. At £14.95 it is almost ludicrously underpriced for what it does and, more importantly, what it allows others to do.

Already, a number of adventures are available which have been written with the aid of *The Quill*, a recent notable being the engaging and infuriating *Denis Through The Drinking Glass* by **Applications**. But Gilsoft themselves are now marketing a range of adventures written by several authors who have used *The Quill*, under the umbrella name of *The Gold Collection*. We take a look at some of them now. **Lloyd Mangram**



GO NORTH

It's dark in here,



Africa Gardens

Producer: **Gilsoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Tom Davies**

Under the general hading of The Gold Collection, *Africa Gardens* is one of Gilsoft's new adventure games which has been written with The Quill adventure writing utility. While the game loads, there is a very detailed title-page to admire, showing a low wall, topped with luxuriant foliage and split by a large stairway leading up to the colonial-looking mansion which tops the hill. A board in the garden says, Africa Gardens Hotel.

After a long journey you find yourself standing outside the faded Victorian guest house under a cold, wintry sky. Evening is closing in with misty rain adding its eerily swirling touch to the Hammer horror film-like scene-setter. You are told, 'Mr Robinson insists on your every comfort in the hope that you will extend your stay. Indeed, Mr Robinson hopes that you may be amongst his many guests who feel they can never leave.'

With this chilling formal courtesy, the player is led into a deceptively quiet, elegant and respectable mansion redolent of past guests and their comfortable stays. The mechanics of the game are what we are used to. You can get objects, drop them and 'spell' them, which releases any latent magical powers or breaks other spells. Some objects may help, others may hinder or not be needed until later – and as yet unknown – locations. *Africa Gardens* uses the Quill's inbuilt objects conveyable figure, which means you may only carry four at a time. A lit candle may be a boon for this murky hotel's upper reaches, and to have the Book of Spells is sheer magic (power to your elbow). Needless to say, *Africa Gardens* has its very own secret room, a few priest-holes and its hidden treasure that is very well hidden! Unlike many hotels, this one has only one exit, and the management sincerely hope you don't get to use it!

Although very largely text only, the author has dropped into a few sudden graphics here and there.

CRITICISM

'Quilled adventures have an instant response to input, so there's no waiting around. The text is very clear, with usable objects tagged by coloured bars, some of which flash. Using Inventory, when you are carrying four objects, can make for a veritable fireworks display of colours and flashing! There are numerous locations and a map is an essential, especially when you have to keep dropping objects in order to pick others up. You can then note on the map where exactly you left them. The hotel's rooms echo with sounds of people never quite seen, cigar smoke lingers in the air, warm food is still on the dining-room table – some of it not very nice at all. The descriptions are excellent, detailed and dripping with atmosphere. The nomal horrors of grammar and mis-spelling so common in many adventures seem to have been winkled out in this one, apart from the *spalshing* water in the fountain – but perhaps that's a clue?'

'I think this game has the best atmosphere created by the location descriptions in any adventure yet. You can literally picture the rooms in your mind's eye, even smell them. So, even if you never get anywhere near a solution, exploring the house is an experience in itself. And there's always this nagging feeling that if you start again you might just find that overlooked little room that will make all the difference. It's very addictive.'

'In most adventures some form of LOOK, SEARCH or EXAMINE seems to work, but not in this one. This leaves you bereft of the usual options for discovering more about an object or a situation, and forces you to be even more ingenious than usual. If you're a sucker for a supernatural challenge then a visit to *Africa Gardens* may well be beneficial for your health (meals apart – tasty-looking dishes can make you throw up when you discover what they really are). The pets, too, can take against you for no apparent reason. Despite your inability to EXAMINE or EXPLORE, exploration or the house and the gloomy gardens with their freshly turned soft earth results in descriptions that might have come from a Dennis Wheatley novel and quitting could well be more to do with having to keep looking over your shoulder while playing than a failure to find the exit – and don't forget, Mr Robinson returns at three . . .'

COMMENTS

Response: instant
Graphics: simple text in coloured boxes, some object graphics and a few location graphics all instantly generated
General rating: excellent, addictive and very good value for money.

Use of computer	**80%**
Graphics	**60%**
Playability	**86%**
Getting started	**90%**
Addictive qualities	**93%**
Value for money	**94%**
Overall	**84%**

Barsak the Dwarf

Producer: **Gilsoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **P & V Napolitano**

Barsak is another Quilled adventure in Gilsoft's *Gold Collection*. During and after loading it says behind the title 'The Early Days' – does this imply it's only the first of a series? *Barsak* takes us back to the heartland of traditional adventures, the ancient days of the mythological underworld where the dwarves held the Nine Treasures. They have been lost, and now Barsak seeks to recover them. To complete the game it is necessary to wear or carry all nine treasures and sign the book at the end. Short instructions inform you of some basic facts about Quill adventures, the use of verb nouns format and the fact that the computer only examines the first four letters of a work, so that there is no need to type beyond that number, also that the adventure can be SAVED at any point.

Barsak commences his adventure in a dense forest with only one exit North. This leads to a clearing in which stands a large and rather run down castle. Exits to the north-east and north-west end up leading right round the castle in a circle. Leaving the clearing northwards takes you into the castle itself with its numerous locations in the curtain walls, barracks and keep.

Useful objects in this text-only adventure are shown in a darker blue. The first major problem is to find some food – you only have 17 turns before death sets in through starvation.

CRITICISM

'Of the four adventures from the *Gold Collection*, this was the least interesting I thought.



can't see anything..



As it is strictly text-only, it does require more location description than is provided. After all, playing an adventure like this, is a bit like reading a book, The Adventurer needs to have his appetite whetted, and a sense of excitement built up. The descriptions in *Barsak* are very short and to the point and reminded me a bit of those provided in the manual to *The Quill* for its tiny example adventure. The limit on surviving before finding food also irritates, not in itself, that would be fine if there were sufficient interest to capture the player before the limit runs out, but in *Barsak* it seems awfully difficult to get anything done with what you are offered.'

'One of those bare adventures which make you wonder why they're called adventure at all – travelogue would be a better name. But even the "sights" don't amount to very much, and there is hardly anything to do. You can't EXPLORE, EXAMINE, LOOK under or into and the closest I got to food before the seventeenth (dying) move was to be holding a jar of pickled gherkins which I couldn't smash open, even though I was carrying a trusty battle axe. How's that for logic? No doubt someone cleverer will tell me I've missed the point somewhere, but I might have tried harder if I'd been more gripped by it all.'

COMMENTS

Response: instant
Graphics: text only
General rating: in this case the excellent implementation seems more due to the excellence of The Quill than to the game itself.

Use of computer	78%
Playability	43%
Getting started	54%
Addictive qualities	42%
Value for money	48%
Overall	**53%**

Magic Castle

Producer: **Gilsoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Graeme Yeandle**

Magic Castle is one of the earliest adventures written with *The Quill* and the game has been on the market before the advent of the *Gold Collection*. It is a rare adventure in that it has an incredibly short intro storyline, 'You have to rescue the Princess who is imprisoned in the Magic Castle.' Very mythical! Surely knights of yore like to know at least the name of the Distressed?

The program accepts commands of verb/noun form, which is briefly explained, and then it's 'Good Luck – you'll need it!' Having said this, the game deposits you at a bend in a road where you see a pair of mittens and a sign saying, 'Beware of Boobytraps.' Ominouser and ominouser. . .

CRITICISM

'Gilsoft certainly seem to have a consistently high standard of adventures, and *Magic Castle* is no exception. 'Beware of Boobytraps,' means exactly what it says – I was despatched to hell within the first few moves. If you manage to avoid sudden death there is plenty to do, wandering around forests and railway lines picking up objects in your attempt to save darling Princess. I must admit I didn't manage to get into the castle – something bit me, I felt queer. . . I was dead again!'

'Graeme Yeandle is very sparse with his descriptions but his humour is lethal. He also expects your movements to be sparse and well planned. If not you begin dying of thirst or exposure before getting to pick up that drink, or the warm clothing you omitted to carry with you. All this and traps too, make for a lot of work before reaching the castle itself.'

'I felt the descriptions could have been more atmospheric, and I thought the boobytraps gave you no way out once I'd stepped into them. This is an aspect of adventure games not often developed very far – without much warning you're dead. It could be fun to find yourself in a deadly position in which the next move will kill you if it isn't the right one. Otherwise Magic Castle is a good standard adventure that nevertheless has some oblique solutions to problems, keeps you busy and is well worth the money.'

COMMENTS

Response: instant
Graphics: text only
General rating: good.

Use of computer	80%
Playability	70%
Getting started	76%
Addictive qualities	75%
Value for money	80%
Overall	**76%**

Spyplane

Producer: **Gilsoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **David Brammer**

Spyplane is a text-only adventure written with *The Quill* that indicates quite effectively the scope of the adventure idea. **Artic's Espionage Island** was unusual in that it started off within the confines on an aeroplane, but *Spyplace* is even more unusual, in that it all takes place within the confines of a plane. Of course, it doesn't take much adjustment of the imagination to see that being stuck in a plane is no real disadvantage – planes move about from location to location just like people, or adventure characters, and that is just what happens here.

As a wizard, warrior or priest you only have to worry about your various accoutrements and weapons – with a plane you have rather more to think about. Pressing **Inventory** after loading is complete will be a surprise. No adventurer before has set out alrealdy carrying so much. Your equipment consists of radios for communication, HF, UHF and VHF; you have a radar (with a tendency to go unserviceable at critical moments, but it may be repaired by a ground crew if you land safely); you have ECM (Electronic Counter Measures) which detects the enemy's radar in use (it may go wrong as well); you have sonar and sonobuoys for detecting underwater movements (it's obsolete though and only picks up the very oldest, noisiest of submarines); there's an infrared detector, an ionisation detector (for sniffing submarine exhausts), a mission analysis tape recorder, a camera and a computer.

Finding out how to use all this gear and when is one of the primary considerations. Flying the plane is tricky too. A map is enclosed with the cassette which shows the scenery you will be flying over. You start off at 15,000 feet over the Arzelean sea, and your objective is to gain as much information as possible about Turyan military equipment. You should photograph naval vessels and record any other useful items of information. On the map it shows the sea, islands and mainland of Turya and your homeland Oceania and your main base, Kithna, on a friendly island, and the Turyan base of Santos Field. Landing is a fairly complex business first time, involving contact with ground control, correct approach, and remembering to lower your undercarriage. Too much activity over. Turyan airspace will alert their fighters which will intercept you and either force you down or shoot you down.

Instructions on the insert are helpful, with a list of technical words understood by the computer. There are more than 165 locations, which makes the game quite complex enough to require a map, especially as much of the terrain overflown looks rather similar from high up!

CRITICISM

'The first thing to strike me about *Spyplane* was that it is more like a verbal simulation than an adventure. Use of the radio is somewhat difficult as it tends to alert the wretched enemy to your activities, but landing is hard without it. This



plane is on its last legs, as all the equipment keeps going on the blink! a landing is in order as soon as possible to get everything repaired. The effect of flying a plane over sea and mountainous land is rather well done with the text descriptions, and the game is fun to play.'

'This is an adventure that is not an adventure, more of a searching game but one without much point to it. Nothing much goes on while trying to find enemy naval vessels, except getting shot down by Turyan fighters. Trying to land at an airfield is almost impossible and using your radio always alerts the enemy and ruins your mission. The documentation is very good with the help list of the available vocabulary. Overall, a very undemanding adventure.'

COMMENTS

Response: instant
Graphics: text only

Use of computer	50%
Playability	55%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	51%
Overall	**55%**

Mindbender

Producer: **Gilsoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Paul Styles**

Mindbender starts straight off after loading without any clear instructions as to what to do, or what is expected of you. You find yourself sitting in a small office pursuing the everyday tasks of your humdrum existence. There's a phone, a desk diary and a quill pen (!). Opening the diary, you see a proverb for the day which says, 'They who live longest will see most.'

Suffice it here to say, that after a few sensible moves, all becomes explained, and an instruction page appears informing you that you have become a victim of the Mindbender Machine. This is a powerful computer-controlled device which has fallen into the hands of a revolutionary group who aim to control the world by manipulating the thought patterns of the population. However, due to your incredible mental ability, you have proved to be immune, which makes you an enemy of the rebels. Now you are to be thrown into their underground prison complex, and your avowed intent is to escape, and destroy the Mindbender Machine and save humanity.



This seems a little difficult to do when you find yourself stripped naked in a bare cell with a door and no handle. . .

CRITICISM

'Mindbender is a text-only adventure but makes up for lack of graphics by being RAM packed with a dry sense of humour and a knowledge that a good adventure is one with a lot of things to do. And you don't have to wait much beyond the teasing pre-instruction sequence to find action all the way, as you do find your way out of the cell in a most lethally surprising way. The exploration that follows is both extended and wittily exciting, but beware of reading the small print. . .'

'The author has taken a risk with this adventure of kicking it straight off without an introduction. Still it is called Mindbender, *so a little mental effort solves the problem and leads into to one of the most convoluted, entertaining adventures I have played in a while. The atmosphere is quite different from that of Africa Gardens, but it really works. Locations are easily moved between with a little care and thought, and this game does not suffer from a lack of things to do or places to get to. It effortlessly conveys the idea of using a lift (there are lots) with a sequence which tells you, the doors close. . . the doors open, and then tells you where you are. Like a good novel the action descriptions are to the point and very sudden. I was thrilled by the way I got out of the cell and past the first guard!* Mindbender *should provide hours of fun before the quest is solved, and at first it's fun simply to explore and see the satirical use to which so many familiar things have been put. Excellent.'*

'*Mindbender* offers a diet of screaming guards, electronic scanners, torture rooms complete with old copies of *Sinclair Users* to read while waiting for that chilling command: "NEXT!" A whiff of James Bond seems to follow you round the heavily guarded corridors and lifts of the Mindbender complex. It also goes to show that text-only adventures can really work well, when they're scripted properly. As a result, this one is exceptionally entertaining, it doesn't force you to keep thinking in ridiculous circles all the while, and despite the unfriendly attitude of all involved, the game has a friendly feel. Very playable, and very good value.'

COMMENTS

Response: instant
Graphics: text-only
General rating: entertaining, complex and excellent value.

Use of computer	87%
Playability	92%
Getting started	76%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**86%**



KILL THE DRAGON You must be joking!

CRASH REVIEWERS COMPE

In the first issue of CRASH (February) we ran a competition designed to discover the best reviewers of games from among readers. The results of this competition should have been announced in the third issue (April). We had, however, overlooked the fact that, as they say, everyone's a critic at heart. By the time the third hundred review dropped into the IN tray, we realised that there was no way it would be possible to process all the entries in time. Hence the one-month delay.

WINNER CRASH REVIEWERS' COMPETITION

J. Singh, Hadley, Telford, Salop

RUNNERS-UP

(Not in order of merit)

Steven Wetherill, Kexboro, Barnsley, S. Yorks
E.Munslow, West Bromwich, W. Midlands
Gary Bradley, Glasgow
John Minson, Muswell Hill, London N10
Phil Morse, Welwyn Garden City, Herts



Readers were asked to write three reviews of titles picked from a selection of 79 games, divided into five categories: **Arcade, Adventure, Strategy/board games, Simulations, Utilities and Educational**.

Each review was supposed to be of between 500 and 900 words. However, due to a rather ambiguous use of language (sorry) entrants were a bit confused as to whether they should write three reviews of this length or three reviews which together added up to this length. As it was our error, no one has been penalised for picking either figure.

As it turns out, it was just as well that there was a large selection of choice, but, in the main, the majority of reviewers opted for the more obvious games and there were numerous versions of *Jetpac*, *Hobbit*, *Penetrator* and *Zoom*. From among the ultilities *The Quill* and *Melbourne Draw* proved favourites. We were pleasantly surprised by how many educational reviews we received, showing that this is a vital area of interest for quite a number of readers.

Choosing a winner and five runners-up has been a difficult task, not only because there were so many entries, but also because the standard was extremely high throughout. A factor common to many entries was the tendency to pick games obviously well enjoyed by the reviewer, thus allowing said reviewer to rhapsodise over the game's finest poins rather than actually criticise it. It's always much easier to say nice things about something than to say unpleasant things in a constructive manner. On the other hand, there were a few entries which positively revelled in tearing a program to shreds as a sort of revenge against the computer game in general!

JUDGING CRITERIA

What we were really looking for were reviews that managed to provide a good, concise description of the game in question and combine it with a sense of humour, personal observation and, of couse, an ability to write in a fluent, interesting way. We did say that entries would not be judged on spelling ability, although it would be important to be literate. In the event, there seemed to be very few bad spellers. A number of entries tried to ape the style of presentation as seen in CRASH, which was not necessary at all, although this did not affect the outcome of the final decision; and other wruters steadfastkt stuck to the format that other well-known computer magazines offer.

The winner and five runners-up have provided a varied selection of titles, and although it was felt that the winner stood out, he did so from the runners-up by a faint margin. all in all it was a hard choice.

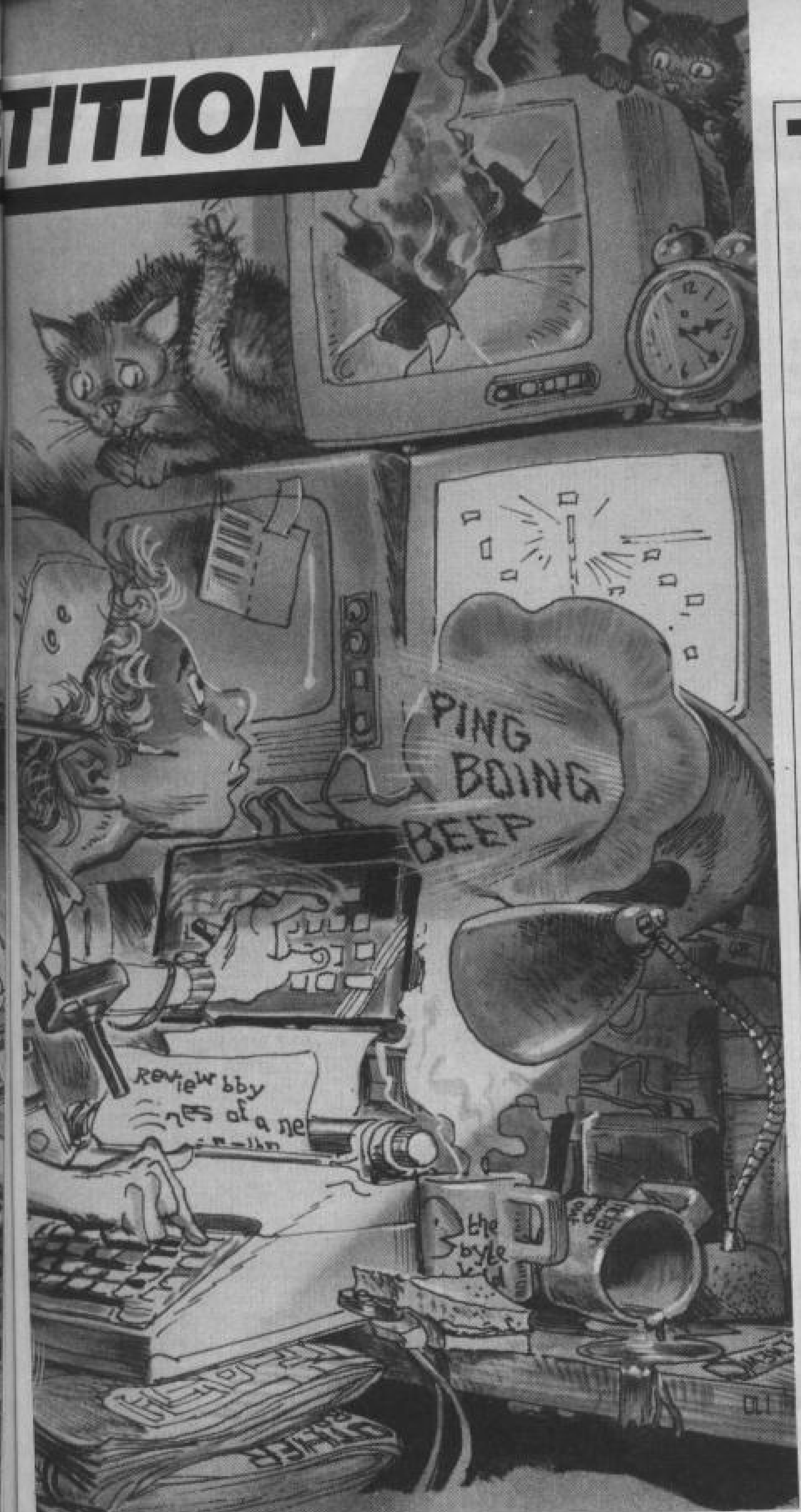
And so to the most important part – the results

THE WINNER'S ENTRIES

It would only be fair to say that in the opinion of the Editor there were several entrants who were able to provide more detailed descriptions of the games than those that will be found in the winner's reviews. But the winner managed to combine most successfully the ability to enthuse over a game while at the same time keeping a sense of overall perspective. He was able to describe the games adequately and in a very personal way. Most importantly, all three reviews start off in a highly original and entertaining manner, creating instantly an atmosphere which makes the reader want to carry on reading.

As printing all the winning entries in one go would take up too much room, we have had to split them up into two sections. This month the winner, **J. Singh**, and runners-up **John Minson** and Phil Morse; next month runners-up **Gary Bradley, E. Munslow** and **Steven Wetherill**. The following month we will be printing some further entries which deserve a special mention. May we thank everyone who wrote in to take part in the competition.

In addition to the winner and five runners-up, the following get a special mention, and extracts or whole reviews will be appearing in following issues.
Vic Groves, Regent's Park Esate, London NW1
A. J. Green, Toddington, Beds
Rob Holmes, Wirksworthy, Derbyshire
David Branston, Hall Green, Birmingham
S. Guillerme, London W8
R. Norfolk, Scholar Green, Stoke-on-Trent
H. J. Lock, Wallington, Surrey
David Dursley, Clifton, Bristol
J. E. Price, St Albans, Herts



WINNER

CRASH REVIEWERS' COMPETITION



Jaswant Singh is 19 and lives in Hadley, Telford, with his family: mother, father, two sisters and brother. He went to Manor School, just down the road from where he lives, and he left with 10 O-levels and four A-levels. He now works for Lloyds Bank. The CRASH Reviewers' Competition isn't the first competiton that Jaswant has won. In May 1982 he won second prize of £300 as an A-level student in a competition organised by Barclays, writing on teaching and the microchip. He was also a runner-up in a nationwide competition organised by The Observer and Whitbread of the subject, How the Chip Will Change Society.

Jaswant bought his first Spectrum in October, and says he prefers playing arcade games. He does not use a joystick, although he is thinking of getting one soon. We hope that Jaswant will be joining the team of CRASH reviewers very soon.

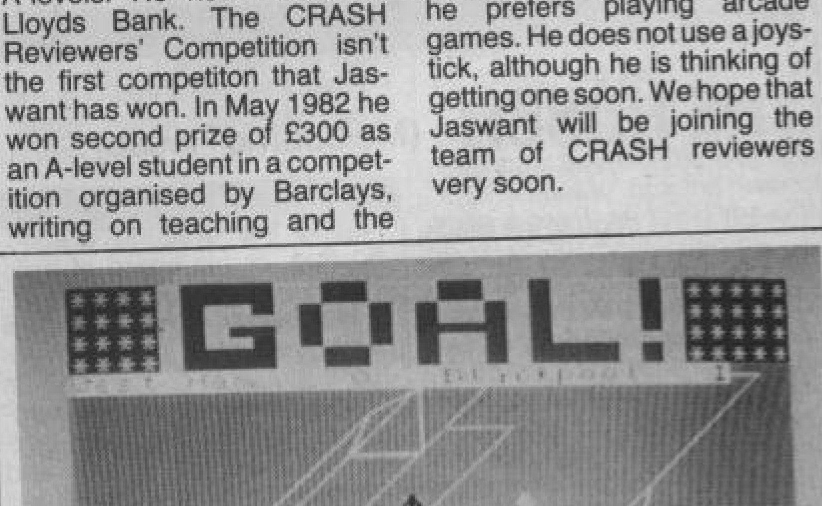
J. Singh
Football Manager, Hobbit, Jetpac

FOOTBALL MANAGER (Addictive)

It's 4.40pm on a cold winter's day, your team are two goals down with five minutes left to play. The crowd are booing loudly for such small numbers, and the directors are well aware of the league position and of the massive overdraft you've caused by unsuccessful dealings in the transfer market. Suddenly, a bottle of Scotch and a hole in the ground seem a very attractive proposition. . . .

If you thought that kind of pressure could only fall on Peter Taylor then you've not played *Football Manager* – a compulsive game and an accurate portrayal of a manager's problems. You can choose your team, pick or buy players and watch them crash out of the FA Cup or encounter relegation.

The game starts at the beginning of the season in Division Four; after inputting your name and choosing the team that you want to manage



you are away on your quest for the First Division and Wembley glory in the FA Cup. Of the seven levels of play it is best to start as a beginner since the higher levels would leave even Brian Clough speechless.

The game kindly gives you a hefty bank balance and several options before playing that all-important first match. You can list or sell your players, pay off that loan or make it an even bigger millstone around your neck, change the team name or players' names. If a player becomes available on the transfer market you can make

the highest bid you can afford, knowing the high value his team have placed on him. Should you not wish to exercise any options, the program displays the forthcoming fixture and various team attributes such as morale, the strength of the defence, midfield and attack,. If you wish to maintain the present team selection, the program's best feature becomes quickly apparent. In a three-dimensional view of the pitch, match highlights are played out with every goal announced American-style by a large scoreboard at the top of the screen with the magic word **GOAL** emblanzoned across it in giant letters.

The game's end shows the result and is followed by an update of your financial condition, your gate money, wage bill and weekly balance tells you whether you can afford to pay off your debts or whether you can afford to buy another player.

These are the attractions of this simulation as it mirrors the problems of football at all levels. The manager has to decide all aspects of his team and the challenge of finding success both on the field and on the club's financial balance sheet provide the compulsion of this game. It can be acutely agonising to watch your league position fall when the league tables are calculated, and exhilarating when the position improves.

This game has been on the scene for a long time, and its age is betrayed by the presentation, which is not up to the high standards required today. The match highlights are well animated and the teams are portrayed by little men who run and shoot realistically, but it is let down by the dull grey border which is shown throughout. The options display is dull and response to commands is slow, and the player is kept waiting while the league table is calculated. The game is also slowed down by having to use the number **99** to persuade the program to continue (the choice of this two-digit number for this job is for arcane reasons beyond rational explanation).

However, this is still a highly absorbing game which, with better presentation, would be a classic. Highly appealing to the football fan and providing a lasting challenge with room for both strategy and that touch of luck that can turn any match. This game will differentiate between fans who believe they can do better than present managers and those who really can. Good value.

THE HOBBIT (Melbourne House)

I stood at the edge of the Black River (not very wide across) and pondered my situation. I had the **short strong sword** and the **rope** courtesy of two dead (literally stone-cold dead) trolls, and the **valuable golden ring** snatched after great effort from under the nose of a now dead Gollum. (It seems pathological killers are well catered for in this game.) I had been incarcerated in, and escaped from, the notorious **Goblin's Dungeon** with a little help from my friends. I had met the friendly elf **Elrond**, and found refuse in **Beorn's House**. My companions, a singing dwarf and a wandering wizard, had long been left behind. Well armed and supplied, I had crossed mountains, killed goblins and acquired maps. Familiar with the almost certain fatality encountered by taking some routes, I had now reached an impasse, I could see no way of finding the dreaded dragon, **Smaug**, or his hoard of treasure.

However, the game's superiority over other adventures available to me, and its unique feature of independently moving characters, persuaded me to persevere, and my capture by a wood elf led me deeper into this complex game. Eventually, by following the plot in the famous book, I found and killed the dragon and laid claim to his treasure. Unfortunately that is only half the game, as the treasure has to be carried back to a now far-distant starting point.



The most remarkable features of this game strike you very quickly. The high resolution graphic displays promised are delivered in the title page when the game is loading; Smaug the ferocious dragon belches such realistic flames at you that I almost felt the need for an asbestos shield! Any adventure played for the first few times invariably seems to result in frequent death, and after restarting a few times the second powerful feature becomes apparent: the characters move independently of you, so you are never sure whether your two companions will help you in the next location or whether they will hurriedly depart to leave you in the company of vicious thugs like wargs or goblins who will quite happily decapitate you despite your pleas for mercy.

Yes!I said pleas for mercy because you can communicate with friend or foe depending on your inclination. This device is very helpful in exploiting the abilities of your companions, and much of the game depends on successfully communicating your ideas to allies.

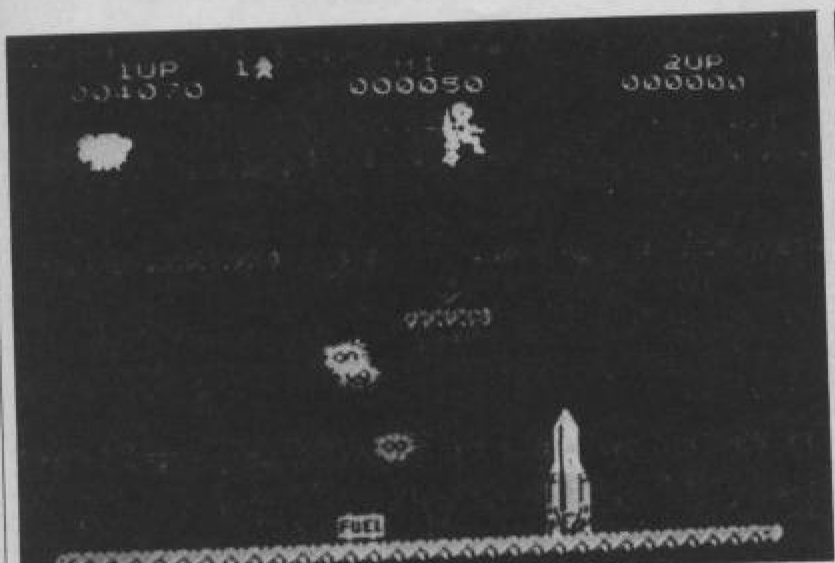
These features, in addition to the fantastic scenario and depth of imagination used in Tolkien's book (whose plot seems tailor-made for conversion into an adventure game), make this program a remarkable achievement. The high-resolution pictures, of which there are about 30, were drawn with the help of an artist whose eye for colour and detail provoke the atmosphere of Tolkien's book at the various locations: the **Bewitched Gloomy Place** is dark and forbidding while the **Bleak Barren Place** is suitably inhospitable.

The Hobbit is accompanied by the original book, which is followed faithfully, and many clues are to be found therein. An instruction booklet is also contained in the package and explains the highly flexible user-friendly language *'Inglish'* which the game understands. This, incidentally, was developed by a linguistics expert and allows for longer more complicated sentences without the limit of one objective per sentence. The instruction booklet is well written and the game is easily entered into. The high-resolution colour displays help your imagination to envisage *The Hobbit's* world, and the response to instructions is very quick. Quick responses are also required of the player as *The Hobbit* plays in real time, thus adding to the excitement. I can wholeheartedly recommend this game as it is easy for the novice and provides the veteran with a welcome change from the limited uninspired text-only adventures. A scoring system (mine is 77.5%) allows for friendly competition. At £14.95 it is very good value.

JETPAC
(Ultimate)

Situations Vacant
Wanted: Space Test Pilot
Qualifications: Rocket Pilot Licence, elementary technical knowledge and Award of Merit from League of Blasted Aliens
Special Details: Volunteer required to assemble and launch test vehicles.

Dangerous conditions (hordes of homicidal entities alien to all known galaxies), but good rewards for initiative can be acquired through a 10%commission on all minerals secured. (High profits assured on every trip.) Lengthy experience in laser weaponry required, strong nerves essential, and a preference for working alone. Xenophobiacs preferred, a pathological tendency to blast everything in sight helpful. Certificate of Insanity not mandatory but also helpful.



Can you fulfil the above criteria and become the Ultimate test-pilot? This job is not for the faint hearted or for those with lethargic reflexes. The task itself is simple enough; as sole test pilot for the Acme Interstellar Transport Company 'you' have to assemble a space ship which is conveniently distributed in bits on the planet surface while fighting off hordes of maniacal aliens. Once assembled the test-pilot must wait for fuel supplies to descent from the heavens or he can supplement his income by collecting the various gems that also accompany the fuel supplies. The screen display shows the planet surface, the rocket parts awaiting assembly and three ledges at various heights. The screen has a wrap around effect which enables the jetman's laser to leave and re-enter the screen at opposite points. The aliens are of different colours, and their numbers are supplemented by new arrivals to prevent you from feeling lonely.

Your jetman can negotiate 16 screens and assemble four space ships before the game begins to repeat itself, but getting there is a difficult task as the aliens vary from subnormal laser-fodder to vicious 'intelligent' hunters who follow you around the screen. None of the aliens is armed but collision is usually fatal.

It is easy to see why *Jetpac* turned **Ultimate** into a household name virtually overnight; even now it stands out amongst the plethora of mediocre arcade clones. The presentation of the game is excellent, it loads reliably under a beautifully designed title-page which shows almost exactly the cassette inlay illustration. The keyboard controls and the game itself are comprehensively covered within the inlay; however, the program, once loaded, gives you a choice between keyboard and joystick controls, or between one and two players.

The graphics are colourful and the test-pilot jetman with a rocket pack on his back is accurately drawn with remarkable attention to detail. The animation of the jetman is superb and his movement in flight, and that of the aliens, is very smooth indeed. My favourite piece of animation is when the fully fuelled rocket blasts off for another planet with the frustrated aliens hopping about angrily in the flames from the rocket's afterburners. The smoothly animated multi-coloured laser blasts and the variform aliens are very eye-catching as well.

The only criticism with this cassette (if one is hyper-critical) is with the sound, which is adequate without being exceptional, and with no catchy tunes being played.

In appraising this game it is difficult to find any real faults. The game is easily played with either the keyboard or joystick. The high-resolution colour graphics and excellent animation routines make full use of the Spectrum's capabilities. Ultimate have gone a long way towards creating the perfect arcade-quality game, and at only £5.50 my verdict is rush out and buy it before Ultimate realise that it's grossly under priced.

RUNNER-UP
Phil Morse
Alphabet, a, b, c . . . lift off, Time

ALPHABET (Widgit)

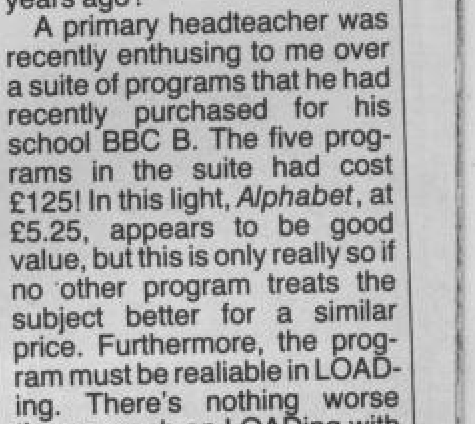
Alphabet presents itself in a standard plastic cassette case with a folded card insert that includes the intructions for operation of the program. The tape appears to be recorded on one side. When loaded the program gives you a choice of three activities, although number one is merely an abridged version of number two.

The program aims to give children (Widgit say 'young children' – probably implying 3-6+) a familiarity with letters of the alphabet by associating them with computer drawn pictures. The first part of the program allows you to specify a number of letters to work upon and then chooses a random point in the alphabet at which it then starts to draw its pictures. It is a slight pity that an option to specify a starting point could not hve been included. The second part of the program works in exactly the same way but displays pictures for the entire alphabet. For each letter, a picture is gradually drawn on a blank screen. The child must then press the correct computer key that corresponds to the first letter of the object displayed. The keypress is read directly and does not need the use of the ENTER key. Should the child press the correct key, he is rewarded with a whole verse of 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep' through the Spectrum's speaker. Can you imagine what 26 consecutive complete verses of this do to you? Should you choose the wrong key to press, the computer clears the screen and blandly re-draws the picture for you. After six wrong inputs, it was still insisting on doing so without comment or aid.

The third part of the program is rather more useful. A lower case letter is drawn on the screen (using the PLOT, DRAW and PI commands, it would appear) and the child is then required to press the key with the corresponding capital letter on it. This exercise is very worth while for infant children since it extends their scope of letter recognition from 26 to 52 letters. It also meets, head on, the problem encountered in programs like the **Sinclair/Macmillan** *Learn to Read* series where a child is asked to copy a lower case letter on the screen by pressing an upper case letter on the keyboard. This program makes a valid exercise of doing just that. One possible flaw, however, appears at this point. Infants are taught to form lower case letters by starting at a particular point and proceeding in a particular direction. The program, when it 'draws/writes' its lower case letters on the screen does not always follow the accepted conventions. Nevertheless, should the correct key be pressed, the matched picture is drawn on the screen as confirmation.

The selection of pictures chosen to represent the alphabet is fair, with a few exceptions. The owl is particularly good, the zip rather clever – but was that really a fish or a vest, and why do people insist upon representing trains with steam locomotives when they went out of regular service 20 years ago?

A primary headteacher was recently enthusing to me over a suite of programs that he had recently purchased for his school BBC B. The five programs in the suite had cost £125! In this light, *Alphabet*, at £5.25, appears to be good value, but this is only really so if no other program treats the subject better for a similar price. Furthermore, the program must be realiable in LOADing. There's nothing worse than a crash on LOADing with a class of small children looking on, laughing at your high-tec antics. I had such trouble getting this tape LOADed that I had to take it back to the shop and exchange it. Even now, it does not always go in every time. If a parent donated *Alphabet* to our scool software library, I would accept it gratefully, but I am not sure that I would purchase it out o the school fund or PTA accounts.



a, b, c . . . LIFT OFF!

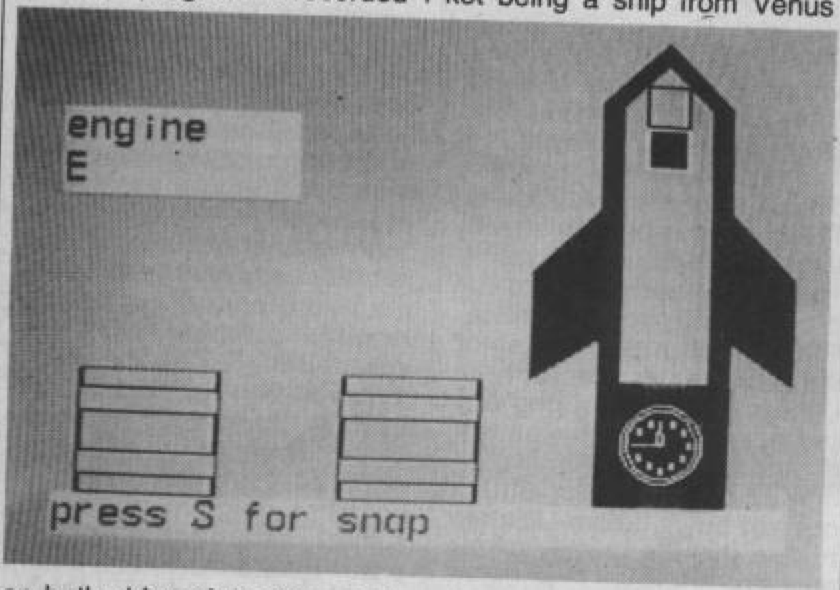
(Longmans/Micromega)

a, b, c . . . LIFT OFF! is supplied in a rigid, colourful box, with the cassette sitting inside in a black plastic moulded insert. The instructions are a printed sheet, folded to make a six-page booklet and contains operating instructions and general enthusiastic paragraphs about how good computer learning is for your child, not to mention high-tec advice like supplementing the work of the program by playing 'I-spy' with the given pupil: '. . . . an adventure wonderland of early skills and abilities,' they promise. The program is recorded on both sides of the tape and on LOADing presents an Introduction screen where the logos of Longman and Mircomega glide on and off the display to be replaced by a monkey, who introduces himself as 'Microchimp' and welcomes you to the program. The main body of the program then loads.

When the main body of the program has LOADed, two alphabets of bold and clear upper and lower case letters appear on the screen with a prompt 'press and key to continue.' If you do not do so, about 30 seconds later the program goes into the first of the two format options of the program.

The first part of the program is a matching of word and letter to a computer-drawn picture and the sequence always starts at 'A.' In the lower right-hand corner o the screen a small but clear picture is drawn in a box. Into a box on the upper left-hand corner of the screen scrolls the appropriate word (all lower case letters) and below it the first letter of the word as an upper case letter. You are then asked to press the key corresponding to the 'next letter.' In response to the picture of an apple, I therefore pressed 'P,' this being the next letter in apple. I got a disapproving beep-beep from the computer. It was expecting 'B' as the next letter of the alphabet! Such an indignity, I was glad to see, need not continue, because each time a prompt appears at the bottom of the screen urging 'press ENTERING for game.' This is the real meat of the program.

In the *Lift Off* game, a rocket is drawn on the right-hand side of the screen. Below it, scrolling smoothly along a conveyor belt, are sealed crates. The idea is centred around the rocket being a ship from Venus



wishing to load up with earth-type objects to take back for inspection. As each crate arrives below the rocket it stops for four seconds and is 'opened,' its contents being drawn in it, and in the upper left of the screen a word and letter is chosen randomly and displayed. If the word corresponds to the picture you have just four seconds to press the 'S' key to register 'SNAP.' (That's a terribly short time for a four year old!) If you are quick and correct, the crate is loaded into the rocket. If you make a mistake, one crate is removed from any already loaded. When six crates have been loaded successfully a countdown begins and the rocket takes off quite dramatically, leaving you with the haunting melody from 'Close Encounters!' The 'random' choice of the displayed word, in fact, gives you about a 4-1 chance of getting a snap each time (not a 25-1 chance as you might fear).

Do not be put off by the rather glib and effusive blurb in the instruction leaflet. This is quite a valuable program. My five- year-old and three-year-old children loved the *Lift Off* game. It avoids the fundamental mistake of trying to do what a real book can do better and concentrates on providing a good supplementary activity to an infant's early reading work or a junior's remedial reading practice. I would trust its reliability in classroom use as it has always loaded first time, every time, and has always proved to be a most popular program.

TIME (Stell)

Some educational programs are packed in sturdy colourful boxes which you know must add unduly to their price, but at least they are a strong storage medium for school use. This program comes in a standard plastic cassette case surrounded by decorative but useless flimsy cardboard box/surround, which I dispensed with immediately after removing the instructions on a bit of card which were slipped in the back of the 'box.' The tape, recorded on one side, has three sections: sections one and two having three parts and section three having two parts. The sections can be accessed separately but the parts cannot (well, not without BREAKing into the program and fiddling).

'An educational game for 3-10 years,' says the title slip, which acts as a cassette insert. The scope given to this program by all its different parts should make it a good audio-visual aid in helping children to learn to tell the time. However, certain flaws mar its overall worth.

Section One deals with time in whole hours. Part One requires the child to stop the clock at a given hour by pressing any key. If successful, a mouse is drawn at the top of the screen, and when 10 have been scored the program goes into an animated (?) routine to the tune of 'Hickory, Dickory, Dock' before moving on to the next part of the section. And herein lies the problem. The method of reading the keypress is extremely insensitive. Normally the problem with infants using a Spectrum centres around the fact that they will insist upon 'holding' the keys rather than 'pressing' them. In the normal manner of things the key will then auto-repeat and cause all manner of problems. In the case of this program, however, you have to hold a key down firmly just at the right time for your press to register – certainly no hair trigger here! The programmer must have realised the inadequacy of the system because if the keypress registers at one minute to or one minute past the hour you will still be counted as right! Normally the clock starts off about 20 minutes before the time you will need to stop it at, and each minute jump is registered in about one second, but occasionally it will start off an hour and a half before the due time, entailing a wait of a minute and a half of real time – and if you cannot get the keypress to register then it REALLY is annoying! Part Two requires the child to type in the hour indicated on the clock face. No problem here – numbers, letters and clock face are all very clear, but there is no screen prompt to remind the child to press the ENTER key after typing in the number. Part Three sets a time on the clock face and then asks the child to stop the clock one hour later – same problem as Part One.

Section Two deals with time in minutes, or rather in lots of five minutes, i.e., five past or 20 to (but not 17 minutes past). The shading of the clock to give a graphic representation of quarters of an hour is very effective. Parts One and Two require the minutes to be typed in. If you should have typed 20 but typed 15 and yet realised your mistake before you pressed the enter key, you can just continue by typing 20 and it will push the 15 off the input space. (If you press SPACE, then 0 0 is regiered on the screen for some reason.) Part Three is 'Stop the Clock' again. This time it is ridiculous. When you are teaching time 'to the minute' you really do require accuracy, but you can stop the clock at 5.14 and still get credited as 'Right' for the required time of 15 minutes past five.

Section Three is very useful for it deals with the very important manipulation of converting 'clock time' to 'digital time.' The proliferation of digital watches has been unfortunately responsible for many children failing to appreciate the real meaning of time told from a traditional clock face. The demonstration is clear, but it is

followed by another 'Stop the Clock' exercise.

A great deal of work has obviously gone into this program and the gradation of the stages of learning has been well judged, but its overall effectiveness is spoiled by some of the flaws mentioned previously. Infants find the 'Stop the Clock' exercises almost totally impossible to control. With a little bit of thought and re-programming this would make a very effective and, indeed, good value program. As it stands, I know of quite a few 'Time' programs on other machines which work far better because they are so much more sensitive to the small-fingered user.

RUNNER-UP

John Minson

Chess Tutor, The Hobbit, Melbourne Draw

While the battle to produce the ultimate chess program rages, **Artic's** *Chess Tutor* aims itself firmly at the beginner, who has little use for a version which can kick pawns in the face of a Grand Master.

At first sight this is a standard implementation. The graphics are good, though white pieces might lack contrast on the white squares of the centrally displayed board. Clocks are provided for player and computer, which answers in seconds, though I doubt the absolute beginner needs the pressure of playing against time. At either side of the board is a scrolling display of the last six pairs of moves.



The player always moves up the board, using grid references. Keyboard entries are accompanied by a reassuring beep, with a small tune for Checkmate. There is also an easy-to-use set-up option. This is a user friendly program.

Turning to the tutor side, there is no way that this tape could replace a book for the beginner, despite its ability to display all the move available to pieces. However, having mastered the basics, the best way to learn is by experience, and here *Chess Tutor* comes into its own. It does not play an intimidatingly offensive game on the lower of its three lvels, so the novice can actually win. Furthermore, it will demonstrate all legal moves during play, and will even suggest a move. But its most useful facility is that it allows the player to 'cheat.' If you find that you have entered a bad move within your last three plays you can cancel to before that point and choose another option. Imagine finding a human opponent who would allow that!

Quibbles are that its dependence on three book openings, though useful to the learner, can result in a win in four moves by diverging from them! More importantly the cassette inlay, which is generally good, says that it allows *en passant* – it doesn't! Despite this, a useful companion for those learning the game.

Chess is one of the oldest table-top games, but fantasy role playing (frp) is among the more recent. Its computer equivalent is adventure gaming, and here *The Hobbit* has been acclaimed as state of the art.

The Hobbit goes much further than most adventures in allowing for the human elements of frp. Input is in *Inglish*, using simple sentences rather than the more usual two-word commands. Characters have a semblance of independent life too as they wander about the landscape, and you can even converse with them. The aim is to locate a realistic country within the Spectrum.

To do all his in 48K is impressive. It also provides simple but effective graphics, but sensibly only on first encountering a scene, or when requested. The documentation is good, and the inclusion of Tolkien's novel adds to its scope.

After which it seems churlish to criticise, but for me *The Hobbit* failed to live up to its reputation. The *independence* of the characters was too obviously random. Gandalf in particular wanders aimlessly. As to conversing with them, the usual response is less than helpful, and sometimes totally illogical – a 'No' followed by the request being met!

Keyboard response can be a little strange, and with so much to type in a beep would have been useful. The program is not bug free either, though to be fair the booklet admits that this is to be expected in a work of this scale. I have found that the only way to continue the adventure did not appear as an option on one occasion!

The game also lacks the epic prose of the book, and I don't know that the vividness of more words wouldn't have been preferable to the pictures. I feel that *The Hobbit* suffers from falling between the two stools of tightly structured brain-teasing adventures and the open, human moderated frps. It is probably worth £14.95 despite this, because it is still addictive, but it left me wanting something better.

The title card from *The Hobbit* appears again to be loaded into and analysed by *48K Melbourne Draw*. This is a complex utility, but documentation is very good. I only discovered one omission in its 22 pages of text, and this was solved by reference to the invaluable summary of commands found on its back page.

Drawing, on the full screen, uses eight-direction cursor control via a logical keyboard layout. Lines can be erased and pixels reversed automatically as they are overwritten. There is no circle command but the production of curves is aided by 4X and 16X magnification.

Having produced a line drawing, areas can be filled with shifted 'F' and ink and paper can be changed without problem. Flash and bright attributes are also introduced by single keys.

You can also create UDGs with this program's draw facility, and both they and full-screen displays can be saved to tape. The booklet concludes with details of how to locate these in your own program.

This is a well-implemented utility for those producing their own games or just for doodling. Its great potential means that it needs many control keys, but clear documentation makes experimenting a joy, and it is only limited by imagination and artisitic talent!



THE MONTHLY CRASH QUIZ

CRASH QUIZ RESULTS

Here are the answers to our quiz in Issue 2 on Adventure games and their cassette inlays.

1 Magic Mountain
2 Volcanic Dungeon
3 Valhalla
4 Velnor's Lair
5 The Golden Sundial of Pi
6 Dr Death
7 Manuel
8 Land of Beroth
9 Murtceps
10 The Hobbit, and The Mines of Moria
11 Lady Sinclive and the Pimen

The three winners were: **C.J. Beck**, Kimberworth, Rotherham; **M. Woollen**, Sheffield; and **M. Beck**, Tapton Park, S. Yorks.

In our second issue we also ran a competition in association with **Fantasy Software**, with the 100 first correct entries out of the bag winning a copy of **Doomsday Castle**. The response was tremendous! The 100 winners have already been notified and are now busy trying to get their hi-scores! A list of winners is availble from CRASH if anyone wants it. Most of the answers were instantly available with a little reading, but the last question caused some variations in answers.

1 Quest
2 Arcadia
3 Ziggy
4 120
5 The Black Hole, and Violent Universe
6 Urks, Garthrogs, Nucleoids, Orphacs and a Googly Bird
7 Oliver Frey
8 We accepted: 103, 103.3 or 103 1/3

EXAMINE the two illustrations below carefully. **EXPLORE** the detail with an analytical eye. **SEARCH** for the hidden differences between the two drawings. If you can spot the 12 differences between picture A and picture B, make a small circle or cross over the differences in picture A, and send it to us. Your entry will go NORTH into the Mystery bag to be shaken and drawn in time for the result to appear in the July issue (No 6). The first three correct entries will each win **£25 worth of software and a CRASH tee-shirt**, and the three runners-up will also receive a CRASH tee-shirt each. Entries must be received by May 23. Don't forget to put your name and address on your entry!

CRASH QUIZ, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB



A



B

UIZ

LIVING GUIDE
TO SPECTRUM SOFTWARE





Crash Guide Game of the Month

VELNOR'S LAIR
By Derek Brewster

The Black Wizard Velnor has gone into hiding in the goblin labyrinth beneath Mount Elk. After centuries of searching he has finally discovered the ancient tomb of Grako and is about to realise his ambition, to become a true demon on earth. There is only one hope for mankind, and that's you, of course. You must penetrate Velnor's defences, avoiding the traps and surprises before his metamorphosis is complete – but Velnor is a master of illusion.

To undertake this text-only adventure you may elect to go in the guise of a wizard, a priest or a warrior. Each has its own characteristics. The wizard is poorly equipped to physical combat, but his powerful magic compensates for lack of strength. He has a polymorph spell which turns any non-magical creature into a frog. The fireball spell can be used (at a distance) to consume any living creature within a specific location, and the teleport spell carries you and anything in your possession from any location to the cave entrance. Spells used drain the wizard's spell strength.

The priest is somewhat better off than the wizard when it coms to comat and he has a number of defensive spells to use, such as a shield, which decreases vulnerability during combat and makes the priest as hard to hit as the warrior. A healing spell can be used after wounding in combat, and there is also one to dispel any undead creature.

The warrior is obviously best suited to physical combat, the hardest to hit, and can take the most punishment. He has no spells to use, but may make use of any magic object found during the quest.

Combat during the game takes place in rounds where each creature involved is allowed one action, at which point you may continue or flee. There are no graphics in the game, but the border colour alters from white through to black, indicating your state of health.

Although the locations and their positions in Velnor's Lair remain the same from game to game, as do the objects, the living and undead creatures tend to be quite random.

Velnor's Lair was written some time ago, in BASIC, and therefore suffers from hesitant responses, but this is hardly any deterrent to enjoying what turns into a highly complex and convoluted adventure with plenty of humour. Some quite devious solutions are required to problems – getting through the spore-ridden atmosphere of the passage leading to the Goblin's lair is a case in point (but did you remember to pick up the silk handkerchief?). Velnor creates a number of illusions which result in sudden death until you get the hang of treating nothing as an absolute until it's been tested carefully.

Velnor's Lair is definitely one of those games that attract you back for another play, possibly months after your first try, and Derek Brewster has built in enough situations and solutions to make it rewarding. It was originally released under his own company, Neptune, but is now marketed by Quicksilva, price £6.95.

Due to the enormous amount of games which have been pouring from the keyboards of software houses over the past few months, the CRASH SPECTRUM GUIDE has already grown beyond our original expectations. After consulting several of you at the 10th. ZX Microfair we have decided to split the guide up into two sections, each printed alternate months. The alternative to this would have been to start cutting down the entries, which we felt would rob the guide of some of its value.

Programs are listed under convenient headings with the programs listed alphabetically by title. The software house is shown, together with the memory required, the retail price and author where known. The figure in brackets after the price indicates the issue of CRASH in which a full review for the game may be found (where it exists). Please note that references to joystick provisions invariably refer to the type of interface that may be used.

CARDS, BOARDS & GAMBLING

We were tempted to call this section *CARDBOARD GAMES*. Sadly, quite a lot of games in this section are pretty flimsy. Part of the problem is that as soon as you remove the physical reality of dealing cards, gambling real money or playing with friends, the game loses a lot of its interest. But in cases like the Psion Scrabble, the programs are not only excellent, but some of the tedious setting up is taken away. It's obviously a question of personal choice ...

ARCTURUS
Producer: Visions, 48K £6.95 (3)
An awful lot of memory and effort go into the long-winded and entirely irrelevant history of this game's name, but it turns out to be none other than a 3D noughts and crosses played on 4 x 4 grids, four of which are stacked one on top of the other. A winning line is a straight one up or across a grid or vertically through the grids, diagonals included. Two players may oppose each other, one player play the computer, or you can have the computer play against itself. The program is a slick one, but its main drawback is the complexity of the option menu that poses a major task in logistics just to get to play a game. Cursor keys are used to place your move, so AGF or Protek joysticks may be used. General rating: very good for puzzle enthusiasts, especially with its 9 skill levels. Overall CRASH rating 57%, machine code.

BACKGAMMON
Producer: CP Software, 48K £5.95
Backgammon is a board game using dice and counters. Its complexities are too detailed to go into here, but it is important that the cassette inlay contains full instructions for the beginniner. The CP Software version does so. Full board and counter display with two on-screen dice. For a single player against the computer.

BACKGAMMON
Producer: Hewson, 16K £5.95
Clear and simple graphics make this a good version which does well within 16K. Full instructions on program and game contained in insert. Invalid moves refused with alternate moves suggested. On-screen dice, four game options. For a single player against the computer.

BACKGAMMON
Producer: Psion, 16K £5.95
One can usually expect a lot from Psion, and this game is no exception. Very good graphics and instructions with four skill levels, on screen or throw your own dice. Good demo mode.

BRAINSTORM
Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95
The object is to find hidden numbers under a covered grid. Your are given 100 tries per grid. If you open a grid square, or 'door', and the answer is wrong, then the number under that square is uncovered for about one second before disappearing again – a memory testing game. The second program, Puzzler, has the computer generating a random letter matrix and your job is to rearrange the matrix so as to match the computer's letter matrix. Not an easy game, mind boggling in fact.

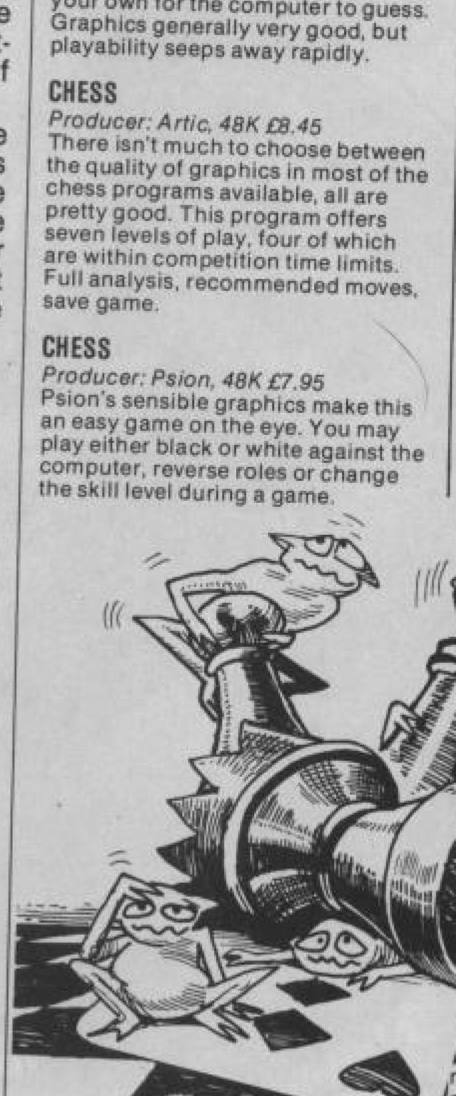
BRIDGEMASTER
Producer: Bridgemaster, 16K £24.95
If Backgammon is a difficult game to explain, then Bridge, the ultimate card game, is impossible. Bridgemaster is a marvellous beginner's course in learning how to play the game. The package includes a computer tape, a commentary tape, very well read and which takes you through the early playing stages, and a book *Begin Bridge with Reese,* which is included for general reference. The demo 'automode' plays through a hand for you in combination with the commentary tape. This is very much a tutorial program — you can play through a hand where the program only allows you to play the card it expects, beeping if you play the wrong one. In this way you become accustomed to the Bridge 'conventions', and it shows you how to take tricks, bid and make contracts and the esoterica of scoring. Uses 55 different deals for teaching. If you want to become proficient in playing Bridge then this is an excellent program, making fine use of the computer and well worth the high price.

BRIDGE TUTOR
Producer: CP Software, 16K £5.95
Two programs, each at £5.95, Beginners and Advanced. Works from 40 pre-dealt hands, each hand used to illustrate a particular aspect of bidding and card play. Conventions used are Acol, Blackwood and Staymer. Accepts only correct bid or card.

CHALLENGE [1]
Producer: Temptation, 16K £5.95
Challenge provides two games on one tape, a version of Higher Lower, and Master Code deluxe. In the first you guess the value of the next card turned up and may gamble a winning line of five cards. In Master Code you must guess the colour code the computer sets up, or set up your own for the computer to guess. Graphics generally very good, but playability seeps away rapidly.

CHESS
Producer: Artic, 48K £8.45
There isn't much to choose between the quality of graphics in most of the chess programs available, all are pretty good. This program offers seven levels of play, four of which are within competition time limits. Full analysis, recommended moves, save game.

CHESS
Producer: Psion, 48K £7.95
Psion's sensible graphics make this an easy game on the eye. You may play either black or white against the computer, reverse roles or change the skill level during a game.



CHESS II
Producer: Artic, 48K £9.95
There's much argument over which is actually the best chess program for the Spectrum. Artic have produced a number of fine tapes, but this one stands out well against everyone else's. There are 1000 levels of play — you choose the maximum response time for the computer, and that dictates the skill level. When pitted against other computer programs, Artic's has consistently beat them — so they claim! But see for yourself. You may change sides, add or remove pieces, list or print out all moves made, and the computer will recommend a move.

CHESSPLAYER
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.94
The Chess Player speaks, at least briefly when he announces himself, thereafter he contents himself with on-screen remarks like, 'that was a pathetic move'. A useful feature is the ability to alter the colours of board and pieces to suit yourself. Six skill levels with varying response times. A good starter's program, because the computer does lose on the lower skill levels, which is encouraging! Computer-recommended moves, but watch it closely — it cheats sometimes!

CHESS THE TURK
Producer: OCP, 48K £8.95
Author: J Hutchby
The strange title refers to the famous 'turk', a chess playing machine built in 1769 for the Viennese Court. The modern 'Turk' is your computer. This chess version has arguably the best graphics of any available, very clearly defined classic pieces on a white and beige ground. A 14-option menu allows for a wide variety of play, printing, listing and editing and includes a demo mode and 'Blitz' game, where a time limit is set for the game. The computer can also be used to display the moves of 2 players, or it can set up a board in any configuration you like for playing newspaper chess problems out. There are 6 levels of play with response times ranging from a few seconds up to 6 hours. Moves are made with the traditional algebraic notation and the game allows for castling, en passant capture and promotion to queeen. Certainly one of the most flexible, playable and best looking chess games for the Spectrum.

CHESS TUTOR
Producer: Artic, 16K £6.95
Whilst limited in its playing levels, this game allows you to learn chess against the computer, by showing you how. You can also play a game against the computer and all legal moves are allowed. Recommended moves, setting up board and save game.

CYRUS IS CHESS
Producer: Intelligent Software, 16K/48K £9.95
This program is winner of the Second European Microcomputer Chess Championship. The 48K side has more sophisticated options such as altering the colours of board and pieces, printouts and game saving. Cursor keys movement allows you to analyse a move or take the piece back. Illegal moves are buzzed. Eight skill levels and a problem level system whereby the computer can be instructed to look for a mate in one, two or three moves. Comes complete with an instruction manual and a library of opening moves. Excellent value.

DERBY DAY
Producer: CRL, 48K £5.95
This race simulation game offers all the fun of the gee-gees without the stress of attending a meeting; or replaces those parlour versions with the rolled out track and wooden horses that were once popular. Up to five players may bet either for points or pence — if it's money, you keep your own book. three levels are offered and when all is ready the computer scrolls the race before your eyes (machine code) slowing down to slow motion as the race nears the finish line. If required a photofinish is provided. Good instructions and graphics.

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The Quill

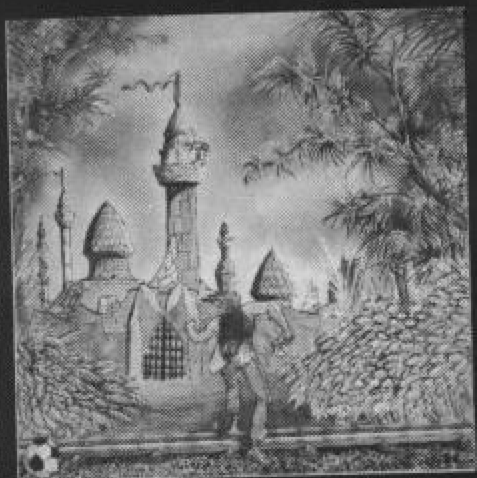
48K Spectrum



£14.95

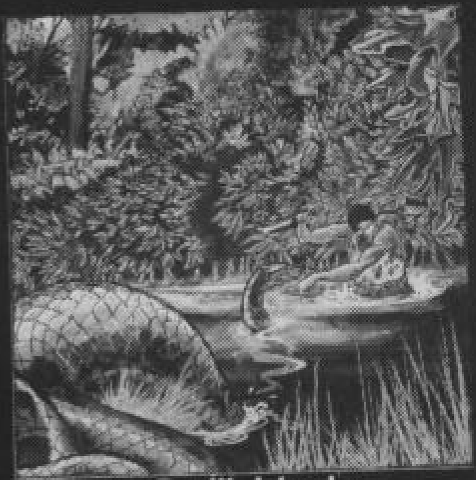
The Quill is a major new utility written in machine code which allows even the novice programmer to produce high-speed machine code adventures of superior quality to many available at the moment without any knowledge of machine code whatsoever.
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From The Golden Nib Of The Quill Comes a Gourmet Feast for Hungry Adventurers Volume 1 of the GOLD COLLECTION



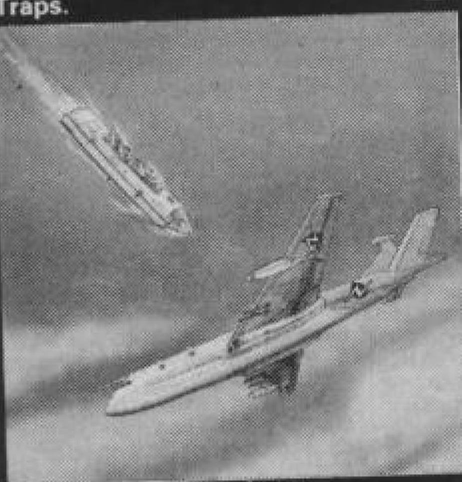
Magic Castle

Rescue the Princess from the Magic Castle but beware of Vampires and Booby Traps.



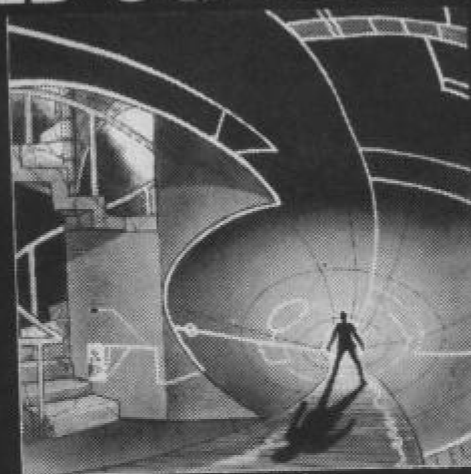
Devil's Island

Escape from the infamous prison maybe impossible, but what alternative have you?



Spyplane

Can you survive and complete your mission high in the sky over enemy territory?



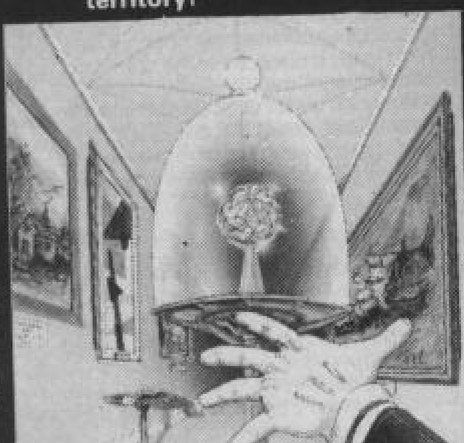
Mindbender

Only you alone can save the world from the terrible power of the Mindbender.



Barsak The Dwarf

Help Barsak recover the treasures of his ancestors from the underworld of mythology.



Diamond Trail

Where in this city of death and intrigue is the stolen Sinclive Diamond?

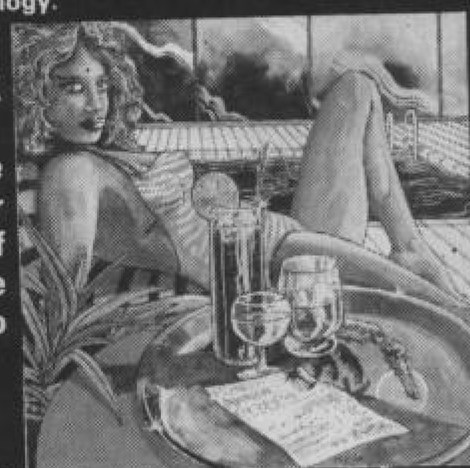
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DOMINOES
Producer: Micromega, 16K £4.95
A competent version of the famous pub game, marred by a complex and unorthodox way of present the play. Dominoes may be familiar to most, but if not there are sensible instructions — provide your own beer though.

DOMINOES
Producer: Phipps Assoc, 16K £4.95
Phipps' version is somewhat better as far as playing goes, with the familiar right angle shapes making life easy, adding up the adjoining ends to make multiples of five or three. 72 points to win.

DO NOT PASS GO
Producer: Workforce, 48K £6.95
A very good computer version of THAT FAMOUR GAME whose name no one dares utter for fear of law suits. Up to six players can take part with all the usual features like buying, selling, mortgaging, houses, hotels, jail, passing GO, Community Chest and Chance. Each player gets £1,500 to start and the screen displays all the relevant info you could want. A pad and pencil are handy though, if you don't want to keep asking the computer to list your possessions. Very good graphics within the Spectrum limitations. The game can be saved at any time.

DRAUGHTS
Producer: Oasis, 48K £4.95 (3)
Oddly, Draughts is a board game which doesn't seem to have attracted much computer attention. In this version there are 10 levels of play with zero being the fastest and easiest. Traditional rules are used with computer refusing illegal moves. Pieces reaching the opposing back file are automatically promoted to Kings. The game boasts excellent, clear graphics and uses the traditional algebraic notation for entries. One player versus the computer, for what it is and for its price, well recommended. Overall CRASH rating 71%, machine code.

FRUIT MACHINE
Producer: DK Tronics, 48K £4.95
The title says it all — the only money you can lose here is the price of the cassette! Features nudge, hold and gamble with good, colourful graphics.

GO TO JAIL
Producer: Automata, 48K £6.00
Automata's version of THAT FAMOUS BOARD GAME differs from the one by Workforce in that it doesn't show the whole board at once, preferring to concentrate on three squares at a time. This does make the graphics a little easier on the eye, but removes some of the fun as well. 2-5 players can take part, with the computer acting as either a banker or a player (useful because you can play in one against the computer). The computer is a pretty mean tycoon as well. Contains every usual feature of the board game and is good value for money.

INVADER CUBES
Producer: Oasis, 48K £4.95 (3)
Invader Cubes is a novel presentation of 3D Noughts and Crosses. The game is played by one player against the computer on four vertically stacked 4 x 4 grids. What makes this game an excellent version is the novelty of using space invaders as markers, and its utter simplicity in play. Despite being in BASIC, the program runs quite rapidly and without any of the confusing frills normally attached to 3D Noughts and Crosses for the computer. All entries are prompted and then verified before your space invader jiggles its way over to the tower of grids and places itself. A winning line results in all four responsible invaders jumping up and down gleefully. The graphics are extremely effective and our reviewers put this version down as one of the best despite its lack of skill levels. Overall CRASH rating 69%.

JACKPOT
Producer: CRL, 48K £4.95
A fruit machine game with full features including, nudge, gamble and hold. You start off with 200 units and each spin costs 10. A neat touch is the money token rolling along the bottom of the screen into a slot, and the payout, which on a jackpot can take almost half a minute! Written in basic, but reasonably fast and smooth.

JIGSAW
Producer: Artic, 48K £5.95
This program contains two screen pictures which are broken up into squares. Only one picture may be attempted at a time. The pieces are all muddled up, and the obvious object is to recreate the picture. It's done against the clock. The two pictures consist of large graphics, one is St. George and the dragon, and the other is of an old fashioned steam engine. Althought the game is quite difficult to sort out at first, it soon becomes easy and then boring. Very good for younger children though. Overall CRASH rating 47%, machine code.

JUMBLY
Producer: DK. Tronics, 48K £5.95
Another jigsaw puzzle game, but with more pictures than Artic's game offers. The object again is to recreate the original picture from the pieces. The graphics are very good, with plenty of detail and smooth animation. The sound is also excellent, with one or two different tunes for each puzzle. Good instructions. Overall CRASH rating 64%, May be used with Kempston joystick. Machine code.

LAS VEGAS
Producer: Temptation, 16K £5.95
Author: Neil Streeter
This tape contains 2 programs, 'Super Nudge' and 'Black Jack'. The first is a fruit machine which features the usual options; nudge, hold, gamble and cross wins. The nudge feature is slightly odd in as much as you can't see how many you have won and they only seem to nudge in one direction. 'Black Jack' is Pontoon, the card game where you try to get as close to 21 as possible. You can't split hands, burn or buy cards. The graphics are good, especially on the cards, but both games suffer with the usual lack of fun in playing gambling games against a computer. Overall CRASH rating 48%. Programmed in Basic with UDG.

MASTERCHESS
Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £6.95
A program with ten playing levels, options to alter the board and piece colours to suit, setting up the board — good for problem solving — recommended moves and game saving, all make Mikrogen's chess game a strong contender.

MONTE CARLO
Producer: Micromega, 16K £4.95
Two games on one tape, casino style Blackjack (Pontoon) and Craps. The Blackjack games has fine graphics and plays the standard rules, but suffers from a lack of interesting options, like buying cards, burning and splitting. The Craps game is the famous dice game of American movies and features a hand shaking the dice until you press the key to release them. Despite the usual lack of atmosphere that you expect when playing communal games with a computer, this program is an attractive one, even addictive.

OTHELLO
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
The 19th Century board game is simple to play, difficult to win. Also known as Reversi, there are several versions. This is a standard one. You can play another person, play the computer, or watch the computer play itself (useful for learning, but not much fun). If you want to play another person, then you're better off buying a real board game version. Computer-recommended moves if stuck.

QUINCY
Producer: Severn, 48K, £4.95
Author: Tony Churcher
Quincy is Yahtzi by another name, basically a five-dice game that resembles Poker Dice except that the dice are traditionally engraved with dots 1 to 6. Severn's version is probably the best, with clear on-screen instructions as to the complexities of play (which are numerous). 2 to 6 players may take part with individual screen cards to keep score. The graphics are very good, and if you like these dice games then this will be a must for your collection. It's also excellent value for money.



REFLECTIONS
Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
Author: Brian Needham
In *Reflections* you are presented with a grid in which mirrors (invisible) have been placed at a forty-five degree angle. The object is to locate them all by shinging a torch into the grid and deducing where the mirrors must be by where the beam emerges from the grid. Each time you use the torch you lose points, and you are only allowed three goes before making a guess as to the position of the mirror for which you are searching. Each correct guess reveal the mirror in question. The graphics are necessarily quite simple. The game appeals for a while but has little lasting value. Overall CRASH rating 50%, machine code.

REVERSI
Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
Clear colours make this easy on the eye. Game features four skill levels and game save.

REVERSI
Producer: Sinclair, 16K £7.95
Excellent graphics, nine skill levels to choose from and you can watch the computer play or play against the machine. Hi-res graphics and machine code. One of the best versions, but so it should be for the price.

ROULETTE
Producer: Micromega, 16K £4.95
If gambling games lack excitement when issued forth from a TV screen then at least they must have exciting graphics to make up for it. Unfortunately the wonders of the spinning roulette wheel are denied us in this game. All you see is a line drawing of the wheel while a flashing number indicates the wheel numbers. All bets possible, fun in occasional doses.

SCRABBLE
Producer: Psion, 48K 915.95
It may seem a lot of money to pay out, but if you enjoy playing Scrabble, you'll love the Spectrum version — even if you don't like Scrabble, you'll love the Spectrum version! There's no denying that this is a fabuloûs program. It allows you to do anything at all you would do in real Scrabble, and if you're playing against the computer it allows you to cheat — but you wouldn't do that, would you? Graphics display is crystal clear; your tile rack can be juggled to make up words, the computer tells you what your word will score and let's you take it back if you think you can do better. Up to four players, the computer may be one or all of them. You can select to see the computer 'thinking' if you wish. Only one failing, the Spectrum seems to get away with some rather odd two-letter words — and you can't challenge its 11,000 word vocabulary. Highly recommended.

SLICKER PUZZLE
Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £5.95
This puzzle is one of the best and most complex. There are 16 x 16 different character positions, which makes for a lot of combinations! In a sense the screen resembles a 2D Rubic cube, the colour of the blocks of which are muddled up by the computer. If you beat or equal the computer's number of moves to solve the combination, then you are give a garbled message. The better you do, the more readable the message becomes. If you get less than the computer you will have to try again from scratch. The graphics are good, although not important, and the colour is very well used, as is the sound. (Skill levels). Overall CRASH rating 62%, machine code.

STAR TRADE
Producer: Digital Dexterity, 48K £6.50 (3)
Author: J. Plunkett
Star Trade is an intergalactic version of 'Monopoly' with a few variations. The property board is laid out in quite a different fashion, but bears similarities in that properties come in blocks depending on their purchase price range. There are other recognisable features like GO, Jail (or Remand Block), a safe area (or Dock) and chance cards. The properties have exotic names like Phobos, Io or Ceres, and between 1 and 9 players may take part against each other and the computer (or Trader). The instructions are on one side of the tape and the game on the other, but the game is run by computer prompts throughout, so this presents no real problem. The graphics are efficient, although a little hard to read because of the crammed screen detail, and the colour could have been better used to alleviate the overall drab effect. An above average board game for those who like the type. Overall CRASH rating 55%, machine code.

SUPERCHESS II
Producer: C P Software, 48K £7.95
There has been much argument between Artic and CP Software over claims for this program, Artic saying their equivalent game beats CP's every time. Nevertheless, this version is very good, with clear graphics, the option to change playing colours and seven levels of play. Several standard openings programed, recommended move and a very helpful HELP which will list the available options.

TOOTIE FRUITY
Producer: Dream Software, 48K £5.95
Author: S Hillyer
Another one arm bandit game with nudges, holds, gamble and jackpot payours visible at the side of the display. This is a version we haven't been able to see yet, so judgement is reserved!

VOICE CHESS

Producer: Artic, 48K £9.98
With similar specifications to the 'Chess' program from Artic, this version will talk you through your game and make comments. Seven levels of play, save, recommended moves, set up board. A good solid game.

YAHTZI

Producer: Workforce, 48K £5.50
Yahtzi, which also gets called Yangtze, Yahtzee and even Yahtcee, is a complex dice game, not unlike poker dice. It is based on the throw of 5 dice, which are shown in the upper half of the screen, while the lower half shows the poker scores, pairs, three of a kind, full house etc. Since between 2 and 6 people can play, it can be party fun time, but I still think this sort of game works better with everyone facing inwards, rather than in a line watching TV.

ZX DRAUGHTS

Producer: CP Software, 48K £5.95
Oddly enough, considering how many chess, reversi and card games versions, there are, there is really only this Draughts program. Perhaps the game is too simple to excite programmers' attention, which would be a mistake, since Draughts is quite hard to play well. There are ten levels of play against the computer. Illegal moves refused and you are forced to take pieces by jumping if there is the option. Pieces reaching the back file opposite are automatically made into kings. Good value for money and one of the more absorbing board games.

SPORTS SIMULATION

Athletics on the computer screen may seem contrary to the vigorous nature of sport, but a number of programmers have turned their hands to simulating various sports with mixed success. At least playing them on your Spectrum is somewhat more active than watching the real thing on telly.

BOWLS

Producer: Lotus-Soft, 48K £4.50 (1)
Author: Derek Jones
If you're fed up with zapping aliens or roaring round the race track, why not retire to the peace and quiet of an English bowling green? This game offers the services of the computer as a mediator rather than player between two opponents. The computer throws the 'jack' and then each player has 4 alternative turns to bowl, the object being to get your bowl as close to the 'jack' as possible. Cursor keys 5 and 8 are used to determine direction of throw, and the strength is determined by choosing the weight of ball, a heavier ball going further. There is a feature which diagramatically shows how close the bowls are to the jack after each throw. The game is neatly executed but suffers the common fault of sports simulations — the lack of ultimate reality undermines the skills required to play it. However, it is good value for money and will doubtless appeal to many. Overall CRASH rating 57%, good if you like the idea. BASIC.

CHAMPIONS

Producer: Peaksoft, 48K £5.95
One of the earlier games on football for the Spectrum, which features rioting fans, club bankruptcy, promotion and relegation s well as the matches themselves. There are five teams in each division, including yourself, and you can pick any name for your own team. You start in the fourth division and play 16 games to get promoted if you reach the top of a division by the end of the 'season'. If you get to the top of Division 1, there is a chance of playing the European Cup. Players may be bought from other clubs and from the transfer market, their prices vary according to the players' skill levels. Factors such as gate money and wage bills are taken into account as well as random elements under the heading of News, which may tell you that rioting fans have caused thousands of pounds of damage. There are no graphics, and the game is quite fast to play. Written in BASIC. Overall CRASH rating of 53%.

CHAMPIONSHIP DARTS

Producer: Shadow, 16K
Author: D Lockett
You might think a game of throwing skill would be difficult to translate into a computer game, but Shadow Software have managed very nicely in this cute and gentle game. After a fine title card, a large, traditional darts' board appears. By pressing any key you freeze a fast moving sweep line, which determines the segment your dart has hit. At the base is a cross section through the board showing the rings — double, single, treble, single, outer bull, bull. It's elegant, simple and very effective. A sensible demo/instruction mode shows you how to do it. You can select the number of points required for a game, enter the two players' names, and the program guides you through three shots in each turn. You must finish with a double or bull of course. Perhaps not exactly exciting, but a fine game and worth the money.

CRAZY GOLF

Producer: Mr. Micro, 48K £6.95
This game works with the Currah Microspeech unit to give a talking caddy. The game follows the pattern of a crazy golf course, in which you must get your ball around the obstacle to putt it. Direction is made via a pointer in the top left hand corner of the screen. The game is fairly difficult to play, with shots requiring good judgement in direction and force. The line drawing graphics are only fair and rather dull, and what might have been an enthralling game turns out to be only average. LOADing can be a problem too. Joystick: Kempston. Overall CRASH rating 49%, machine code.

FOOTBALL MANAGER

Producer: Addictive Games, 48K £6.95
Author: Kevin Toms
Universally agreed as one of the best of Spectrum games of any type. This is as much strategy as simulation as you choose a team from 64 on offer, and try to work your way up from Division four to win the FA Cup. The background to the game is quite realistic, with players losing strength value and gaining it by resting a match, morale worsening with lost matches, declining crowds and resulting loss of gate money, and all the technical and strategic problems of a club manager. Having selected your team, studied the opponent's dossier, you can sit back and watch the fully animated, edited highlights of the match! An amazingly engrossing game with seven levels of play and highly recommended.

GOLF

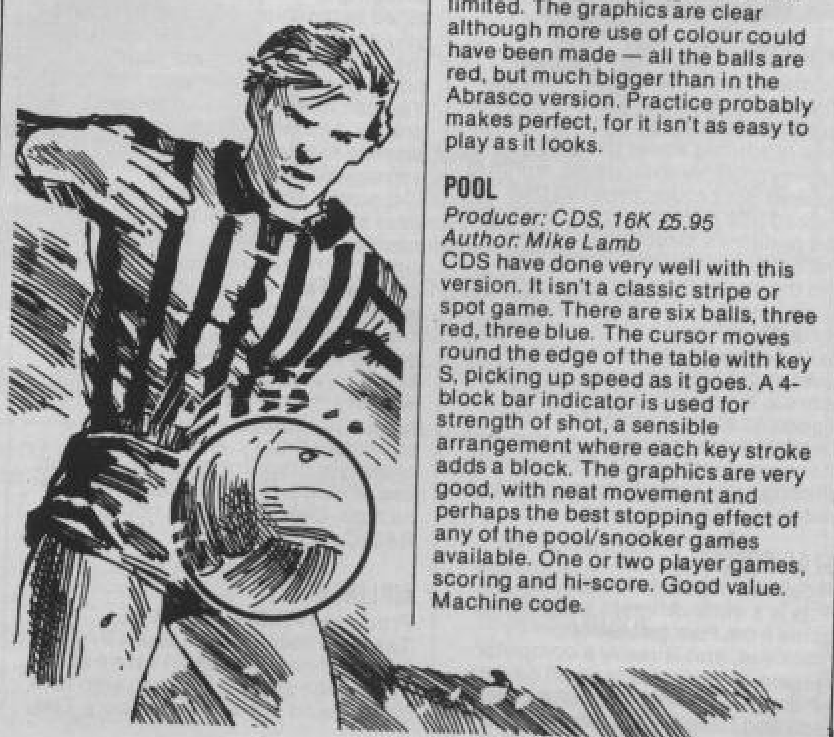
Producer: Abrasco, 16K £6.95
For 16K users this is a very good program with quickly assembled graphics that clearly show positions of tee, green, fairways, bunkers, tree hazards and rough. There's no animated golfer as in the Virgin game, but it's made up for with clearly visible balls that follow a path of your shot. You can input commands to use a 1 or 3 wood of given strengths, or 1-9 irons which ask wehther you want a soft or hard strike. If you pick between 7 and 9 iron, you are realistically asked whether it should be a chip shot or a pitch. When both players are on the green the screen scrolls to a close up which uses a 20 foot scale for judging the distance of the putt. The only drawback might be a tendency to crash if an incorrect variable is entered. An attractive and responsively fast game. One/two players and choose how many holes to play.

GOLF

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: David Thomson
In this version of the noble game, one to four players may take part and play between one and eighteen holes, choosing handicaps up to 28. The higher (worse) your handicap the more erratically random your shots become. There's an option on five clubs with a choice of strength between 0 and 10. When your selection has been made and you have estimated the compass point direction in which to swing, an animated golfer appears and hits the ball. Once on the green a putter is automatically selected. While fun to play there are several drawbacks. The graphics are very slow, each hole being built up character line by character line. The random quality of the handicap system undermines its value — everyone should choose a zero handicap! And the compass points are needlessly difficult as North keeps shifting direction with every hole. Worst of all Virgin have been selling the game with a glaring bug — when asked if you would like another game, there's an incorrect command in the BASIC which stops the program dead. It's easily corrected but annoying.

GOLF

Producer: Artic, 48K £5.95
Sub-titled St Andrews, this game is based on an accurate reproduction of the world famous golf course. Each hole is drawn out showing the well known details and a brief description and history is given. One or two players may take part, playing a proper game or single holes of their choice. You are asked whether you wish to use a wood or iron, strength of shot, expressed as a percentage, whether you want the shot to go straight, fade or hook, and what angle. Arriving on the green the screen cuts to a close up for the putting. The graphics are black on green and very simply drawn. The program is in BASIC so after typing in figures you ENTER, but words are accepted automatically. The temptation to enter W for wood will result in a break into program — the main drawback of an otherwise interesting game.



KNOCKOUT

Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £5.95 (2)
Author: G. Smallcross
Compete against the computer or up to 3 players in what is effectively a Spectrum version of the popular board game 'Rebound'. The object is to 'throw' a ball into a 'G' shaped board, rebounding it off the corner walls, to come to rest in firmly defined scoring area. Each player has 4 balls to a frame, opponents taking it in turns to play each ball off the frame. The ball is positioned on the start line vertically, and an angle and strength determined for the shot. It is possible to knock an opponent's ball into a better or worse position. This is a good conversion of a floor-played game to the computer, and although not particularly addictive in the usual sense, certainly has its own charm and is very playable. Control keys are simple and done to on-screen prompts. Generally good value, overall CRASH rating 62%, machine code.

POOL

Producer: Abrasco, 48K £6.95
Author: K Eaves
A sudden flurry of interest in Pool makes for some interesting comparisons. One of the newer ones is this version from Abrasco for two to eight players, with the option of playing a league. As usual, the cue ball is controlled by a small cursor dot — in this case the cue ball travels towards the cursor, which is controlled by use of the cursor keys (slow and fine tuning) or the zero key for fast positioning. A very clear strength bar indicator is used to determine the distance the cue ball will travel, and is positioned with keys 5 or 8 (min/max). Considering the limitations of the Spectrum and TV screens generally, the graphics are quite good and the movement of the balls is convincingly accurate though terribly busy. Game rules are a close copy of the real game, the balls are marked as spots or stripes and you lose a turn for a foul shot. Good.

POOL

Producer: Bug-Byte, 16K £5.95
This version is unusual in that the cue ball cursor may be placed anywhere on the table, which allows for greater control over the shot. On the other hand this is not a very close copy of the real game. In addition to the cue ball, there are six other numbered balls (you score the value of the potted ball) and each of the two players takes it turn, playing through until all the balls have been potted or he has missed three consecutive pots, or potted the cue ball. In this sense the game is a bit limited. The graphics are clear although more use of colour could have been made — all the balls are red, but much bigger than in the Abrasco version. Practice probably makes perfect, for it isn't as easy to play as it looks.

POOL

Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
Author: Mike Lamb
CDS have done very well with this version. It isn't a classic stripe or spot game. There are six balls, three red, three blue. The cursor moves round the edge of the table with key S, picking up speed as it goes. A 4-block bar indicator is used for strength of shot, a sensible arrangement where each key stroke adds a block. The graphics are very good, with neat movement and perhaps the best stopping effect of any of the pool/snooker games available. One or two player games, scoring and hi-score. Good value. Machine code.

RACING MANAGER
Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: Mark Alexander
Half Strategy, half simulation, this game lets you hire a trainer and select the horses you wish to enter for a season of racing. The object is to get through to the Derby and win it! 25 meetings take place before that big day, with each meeting having several races, so this is not a short game. Money is spent on training, feeding and entering horses into races. It can be made back with prize money and betting on the races. Each horse you have has strength ratings expressed as fitness and speed factors, a best distance factor, and the type of going the horse likes. All these factors must be taken into account when entering a horse for a race. Bets of between £10 and £10,000 may be placed on any race and then you can sit back and watch the race furlong by furlong, or, to speed things up, watch only the last three furlongs. The graphics are reasonable and the game quite compelling, although the package could have been stronger if it had included some more technical details on the esoterica of betting. Overall CRASH rating 58%.

ROYAL BIRKDALE
Producer: Ocean, 48K £6.90
Author: David Thorpe
The golf club on which this game is based, is a famous one, and the program is claimed to be accurate in detail to the real course. The object is to play a round on the 18 holes in the least number of shots. Direction, strength and type of shot must be calculated bearing in mind the terrain. A similar task awaits on the green. The program is in BASIC and therefore has obvious limitations. It's an interesting idea to base golf games on real courses, but there are better implementations of the game available. Overall CRASH rating 47%.

SNOOKER
Producer Visions, 16K £8.95
Author: Tim Bell
A very good implementation of the classic game with a cue ball cross hair that can be moved anywhere on the table. A bit more sophisticated than most other snooker/pool games, it is possible to select spin in this game. The graphics are average, and a little hard to see when selecting a colour to play, but their movement is quite good. Works with Kempston joystick, good instructions, only one skill level of course. Overall CRASH rating 62%, could have been higher but for the price. Machine code.

SNOOKER
Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
With the minimum space devoted to score lines or embellishments, Artic have produced about the biggest playing table for their game, which is a classic six colour, nine red ball. Instead of a moving cursor, the cue ball radiates a direction indicator line controlled by the cursor keys, and the strength of shot is given by using keys A to Z. The table is correctly marked with D and spots. Balls pocketed appear in a green band at the base of screen and the score is automatically kept and displayed at the base of the table. The ball colours work quite well and the movement is reasonably smooth, although the balls do stop very suddenly. Machine code.

STAR SOCCER
Producer: Watson, 16K £5.95
This is a quite different football game from Football Manager by Addictive, and is really a computer version of those old football games where you controlled your men with rods and handles. It's designed for two players, but since you need much of the keyboard, quick change overs are essential! After loading you are presented with a Super League of eight well known teams and a league scoring table. Having decided which team each is to play, the two opponents may select a playing formation; 3-2-5; 4-2-4; 4-3-3; or 4-4-2. The playing field now appears with all the numbered players of each side set up ready for the kick off. The 'players' are not animated figures, but numbererd squares, unlike the well-known Atari version. Passing the ball is done by selecting the player's number to whom you want to pass, and the game rattles along with both sides attempting to tackle, intercept and score goals. Goal kicks and corners are featured but not side throws. This is highly addictive to play — it could even be the end of football as we know it.

TEST MATCH
Producer: CRL, 48K £6.95
This game should bowl over all cricket fans (non-fans will find it all double-dutch). Fast action with no wait times makes it a speeded up version of the real thing. Participation is very limited, however; you're allowed to select the bowlers in your team and order the batsmen, but from then on the game runs itself automatically. Only in the event of a good midfield shot do you have to sit up and decide whether the bastmen should risk a run or not. In fact the odds seem pretty good since the fielders are not very accurate long shots at wicket. Features howzzats of bowled, caught, run out, lbw, and follows real cricket very closely with the exception of Australian beer cans on the pitch.

SIMULATIONS

Under our headings a Simulation Game is one which conforms to the definition that it attempts to simulate real situations of a mechanical nature, and that part of the game is to use instrument displays to control the game as well as usual visual guides.

ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE
Producer: Temptation, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Simon Mansfield
Set in the South Atlantic during the Second World War, this game recreates the actions of the German pocket battleship Graf Spee. The aim is to sink allied merchant shipping and survive attacks by allied battleships. 2 screens provide you, as Captain, with a sea map of the Atlantic and indicate your position and that of enemy shipping. You can direct your ship towards the enemy, and when close enough, change to a sea level view ready to engage with either guns or torpedoes. Instruments show you your speed, heading, enemy position and distance in yards. On sighting the enemy, his ship appears gradually above the horizon. If armed, it begins firing back. A serious drawback is that to keep the enemy in your gun sights you actually have to come to a stop — not very realistic. The option menu for controlling your ship is also extremely finicky. Average block character graphics, good sound and use of colour, 7 skill levels. Okay for its type. Overall CRASH rating 54%. BASIC.

AIRLINER
Producer: Protek, 16K £5.95
Take command of a modern BAC 1-11 jet airliner and land it safely at Edinburgh airport. You can also take off and land at a second airport. The controls are necessarily simplified from the real things, but they are complicated enough and some knowledge of how big jets actually fly helps. There is no view through the cockpit window unless you are on a correct flight approach path, when the runway lights will appear. Extensive instructions look daunting, but are worth digesting so that you don't have to panic at the last minute. Operates in real time, but things happen quickly when the airport is approached! Sensible, clear graphics, reasonable control responses, all in all an absorbing game.

CHEQUERED FLAG
Producer: Psion, 48K £6.95 (3)
Not the definitive Specturm version of 'Pole Position', as many hoped, but an excellent simulation of motor racing. Here you may drive three different types of car around ten different race tracks. There are no other cars on the road however, so this really isn't a game in the usual excitement sense. Very reasonable 3D effect for the road and flattish landscape, which does include mild hills as well. Hazards include bends, water and oil on the road and glass which can cause blow outs. Instead of seeing the car in full perspective, 'you' are inside, your view looking out. The control keys are a little awkward, being too far apart, and there was a general feeling that, while being an impressive program, it was a little 'cold' in feeling. Overall CRASH rating 71%, Machine code.



FIGHTER PILOT
Producer: Digital Integration, 48K £7.95 (2)
Author: Dave Marshall
One of the fastest simulation programs yet. You are in control of an F15 Eagle capable of enormous speed and a cruising speed of 800 knots. The graphics of the instrument panel are very impressive and allow the plane to be finely controlled, just as well at those speeds! A menu offer options on Landing Practice, Flying Training, Air-to-Air Combat Practice (and the real thing), Blind Landing, Cross Winds and Turbulence, and all this on three skill levels. An excellent MAP facility may be selected, which shows the locations of the four air bases you are protecting in the Air-to-Air Combat mode. Enemy aircraft are seen in very good 3D perspective and the dog fights are highly realistic. Definitely one of the best flight simulation games for the Spectrum with easy controls and an excellent flight manual. Overall CRASH rating 86%, machine code. Highly recommended.

FLIGHT SIMULATION
Producer: Psion, 48K £7.95
An early Spectrum program, and always popular, this simulates the effects of flying a single seater light aircraft, including landing and taking off. There are 2 airfields (one very difficult and surrounded by hills), lakes, beacons and a very good map of the whole area. It takes many minutes to fly over the whole map. Instrument flying is essential to success and, as usual, there is a lot of accompanying instruction to digest. The cockpit view is simple but oddly realistic. If you enjoy contemplative games, then this is still one of the best, although watch out for some oddities if you try looping the loop — the program doesn't seem to cope with that!

THE FOREST
Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £9.95 (1)
Author: Graham T. Relph
An amazing program which simulates the sport of orienteering — yet manages to be much more than a sport simulation. An enormous area of geography is enclosed in the program, only a tiny bit of it already mapped for you. Included is a 12 point orienteering



course for you to complete in the shortest possible time, checking each point in the correct sequence. The display shows you the terrain six metres in front and uses symbols for the different terrain, trees, shrubs, lakes, towns etc. Special point features are displayed as messages and an eye level indicator tells you whether the ground is falling or rising, so you can easily follow the contours. In addition you can go off and chart the unmapped areas. The program will draw contour and terrain maps for you or make up 3D views. A massive program, excellent value, recommended. Overall CRASH rating 88%. M/C and BASIC.

HEATHROW – ATC
Producer: Hewson Consultants, 16K £7.95
Author: Mike Male
If you get a little queasy flying, you could always have a go on the ground as an air traffic controller — in this case at the busy Heathrow airport. You must direct incoming flights from the holding stacks safely onto the runway. Your instruments include radar, showing the aircraft call signs, blips and trails; displays giving the altitude and bearing, heading and speed and size of the aircraft. There are 7 levels of play including a demo mode, and you can progress to handling mixed traffic, restricted airspace and outbound flights, as well as cope with emergencies like unknown aircraft intruding, radio failure, loss of runway and on board instrument failure. After this you'll never fly again! Recommended.



HUNTER-KILLER

Producer: Protek, 48K £7.95 (1)
Author: Rod Hopkins
This is a submarine simulation game set off the coast of German Helegoland (North Sea) during the Second World War. You are commander of an 'S' type submarine and your mission is to find an enemy sub in the same area and hunt it down. Sailing too close to the coast may result in your hitting a mine or running aground. 3 screens show you the control room, the chart room and the periscope view of the surface. The instrumentation is quite complex, including ballast indicator, hydroplanes, battery charge, engine speed, rudder angle, heading, asdic, echo sounder and much more. In the periscope you may see enemy shipping and enemy aircraft which will hunt you if you stay on the surface too long. Under water you use electric engines and recharge the batteries on the surface, when you use a diesel engine. The accompanying booklet is very detailed and essential reading. Good graphics and realistic sound, real time operation. Overall CRASH rating 61%. BASIC and M/C.

NIGHTFLITE 2

Producer: Hewson Consultants, 16K £7.95
Author: Mike Male
Drastically upgraded from their original 'Nightflite', this flying simulation allows you to pilot a light aircraft at night, taking off and landing or do acrobatics. New features are a shifting perspective which allows you to see the correct view of the runway lights from whatever angle you approach the airport, many more lights from surrounding hamlets, and a realistic changing engine noise depending on speed. Instrumentation is complex and includes variable flap controls. 7 modes of operation including two auto-pilot modes and a training mode, and 6 difficulty levels. After-flight debrief feature and certificate print-out. 100% M/C.

STRIKE ATTACK

Producer: Micromart, 48K £6.95
The scenario promises an excellent game — your mission as a Phantom pilot is to penetrate enemy territory and bomb a specified target. Stacked against you are AA artillery, SAM missiles and enemy fighters. Entry point is at 70 miles, 10,000 feet, 90% rpm, 400 knots and 90 degree heading. Chances of attack depend on the flightpath — below 2,000 feet there's only a 10% chance of attack, which is still very frequent. The technique for avoiding total oblivion is to break (hard turn) at 4 or 6 gees and change altitude rapidly to avoid missiles. If you stick to the rules in the 12 page manual you will be able to escape every attack. The display shows a 'radar' picture with you in the centre, target to be bombed, and enemy positions. There are also details like speed, heading, rate of climb, target distance and extra messages for enemy attack. The poor variation of attack and slow display speed (BASIC) and the not too exciting graphics are a bit of a let down considering the potential, but if you are an enthusiast of RAF slang you may appreciate the extra messages as the program is written by a Fl. Lt. J T F Dyer.

STRATEGIES

'Strategy' says the dictionary, 'is Generalship, the art of war; management of an army or armies in a campaign – art of moving or disposing troops or ships so as to impose upon the enemy the place and time and conditions for fighting preferred by oneself.' The best strategy game attempt to simulate real conditions in a wide spectrum (ahem!) of activities, and ask you to manage your forces, whether they be armies old and new, or an awkward work force. Most computer versions are lengthy games, so it's important to be able to 'save' them for another convenient time.

AIRLINE

Producer: CCS, 16/48K, £5/6.00
Start off with £3 million and turn in into £30 million and take over British Airways. Hijacks, strikes, crashes and rising fuel costs all take their toll. If you enjoy strategy games revolving around empire building, then CCS are the people for you. Clear text and illustration graphics. Good value for money.

APOCALYPSE

Producer: Red Shift, 48K £9.95
'Apocalypse' is a game of nuclear devastation. It's a long two-sided load and a game for 1-4 players. It can take between four hours and four years to play and if you outgrow the scenario, Red Shift have others to add on. A large selection of maps allows the action to take place anywhere and at almost any period. You set up the empires, their centres, their armies and weaponry. This is a very flexible game of real war strategy which should keep the addict going for a long, long time. Very good value.

AUTOCHEF

Producer: CCS, 16/48K £5/£6.00
You have a million in capital and must increase this to 25 million in the shortest possible time. The problems you must cope with include wary shareholders who are watching your every move, assessing your performance and who may even force you to resign if you're not doing well. Inflation, a sluggish economy and copious strikes are other problems you will face in this lively strategy from CCS. It's all very well eating fast food, but how fast is the money?

BARON

Producer: Temptation, 48K
Author: Simon Mansfield
The game is for 2 to 4 players and takes you back to medieval times (apart from one noted anachronism). At the start of the game each player is awarded a castle, lands, workers and money in the form of 'dubloons'. The object is to plant your acreage, feed your workers, hire mercenaries (and feed them), buy them weapons and raid your neighbouring barons to take money, slaves and land. Slaves are useful because they do as much work as your workers but only eat half as much food. The weapons your mercenaries carry depend on what you spend and can include lasers (?) There are natural disasters to contend with like plague and rats, and if you feed your workers generously they'll give birth to babies. Games of between 5 and 55 moves may be pre-selected, the winner being the most powerful baron at the end of the slected number of moves. There are no graphics to speak of and the response times are quite long. Overall CRASH rating 48% if you're in a group. BASIC.

BATTLE 1917

Producer: C.C.S., 48K £6.00 (2)
This program won the 1983 Cambridge Award. It is a unique mix between a conventional wargame and chess, with the board, or war zone, laid out not unlike a chess board. The opposing armies face each other in formalised ranks with the battle area between them. This is full of obstacles like barbed wire, mines, water and forests. Each side has a King, artillery units, tanks, cavalry and infantry units. The object of the game is to capture the opponent's King. The units move as a group, but can be split up into individuals by the terrain. Each unit has its own characteristics in how much it may move per turn, and what terrain type it may or may not cross. The moves are prompted on screen, so extremely complex wargame instructions are not necessary. If you like wargames, this is quite an original concept with reasonable graphics despite the BASIC. Amusing instructions in the 2-part load. Overall CRASH rating 63%.

BRITISH LOWLAND

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Author: K A Wells
If you've ever thought about putting the British car industry back on its feet, here's your chance! You are the Chairman of a small sports car company, and by careful management you must accumulate a bank balance of £1,500,000. At the start you are presented with a bar chart showing the last 6 months production, histogram showing days lost over last 6 months, a status report, and a bank account and profit/loss account for each month. From then on a monthly option menu allows you to: open a new production line, close one, raise the prices of cars, lower them, or continue on with the other problems in hand. These include annual pay negotiations, industrial injury, a wide range of union demands like longer tea breaks and shorter working hours, and discipline problems like pilfering. The game offers a wide range of strategic options and takes into account the morale of your workforce if you are too autocratic. Good, clear text graphics back up the well thought out program.

CORN CROPPER

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Okay cornballs, time to get your hands dirty down on your 30 acre farm! There's the buying of seed crop to do, ploughing, planting, irrigating, harvesting, storing, hiring of hands, spraying the bugs and keeping an eye on the bank balance. Weather plays an important part, and as usual with these games life just isn't a doddle. Good, clear and colourful graphics.

CONFRONTATION

Producer: Lothlorien, 48K £7.95 (3)
This is a wargame for two players versus each other, you can't play one against the computer. There is a master program to which various scenarios may be added, one is included with the game, but others will become available later. Each player is given 12 various units which he may move across the map and which include many modern equivalents that may be omitted if playing a game set in an earlier period. Like most other Lothlorien wargames, each player must move all his units in turn and by one square. This makes it a long and involved game unlikely to appeal to anyone except wargame addicts. The screen is very crowded and the symbols are hard to read without practice, the graphics are slow because of the BASIC in which the program is written. Overall CRASH rating 45%.

DALLAS

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
The name of the city has become synonymous with oil and JR. The object is to take over the Ewing Empire or be taken over by them if you lose. A map of the Dallas area is divided into a grid and you are offered the option of buying up likely sites for drilling. You can do surveys before or after buying, move rigs to the site, drill, set up production and build pipe lines. The more successful you are the more likely you are to be hit by sabotage and other disasters. Oil prices fluctuate all the while, affecting your revenues. A good strategy game on the whole, although the random elements do seem to intrude too effectively.

DICTATOR

Producer: DK Tronics, 48K £4.95
One of the best early games from DK. You've just become President of Ritimba, an equatorial banana republic. Your reign will be brief and unenviable. How long can you survive your greedy and hated secret police, bullying army, irritating guerillas, bothersome commies, snot-nose landlowners and revolting peasants? Money may be borrowed from the Russians or Americans (if they feel like it). As the game progresses the options run short. Can you make it to a wealthy exile or will you die at your post? Recommended.

EVEREST ASCENT

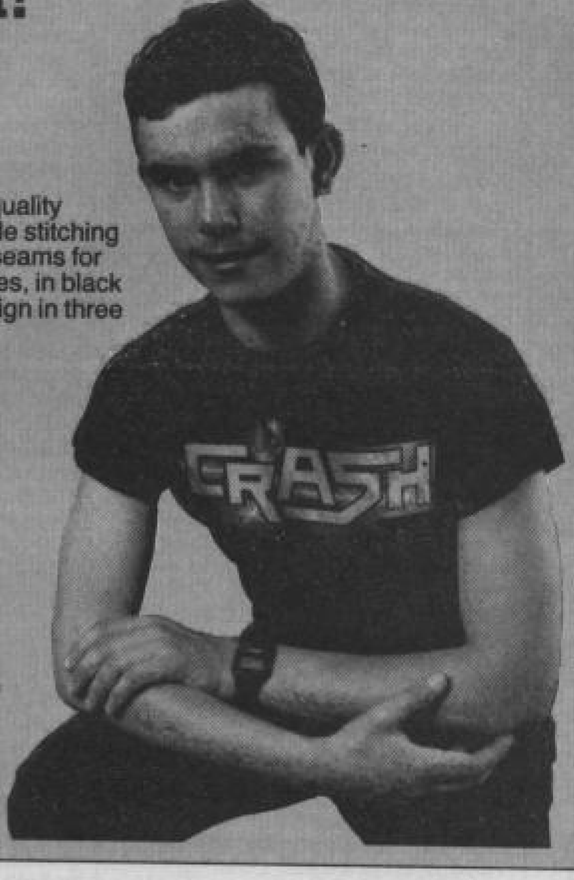
Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
You have 20 days to reach the summit of Everest, starting off with limited funds (money comes in from sponsors if you seem to be doing well, but it isn't credited to you if you've forgotten to buy a radio). You must hire Sherpas with homely names and varying strengths and the habit of deserting you if you're not fed properly. Their equipment and supplies are expensive and they eat like horses. Neat graphics and the familiar prompt menu for buying and moving about. It takes some getting into and early expeditions usually last a short time until you realise what's needed most. A good average.



GANGSTERS!

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00 (1)
Author: P Boulton
The object of this amusing game is to become top dog of Spectral City. You're gang leader up against 4 other rival gangs trying to own the city through operating speakeasies, distilleries, casinos and brothels. This can be done by buying up

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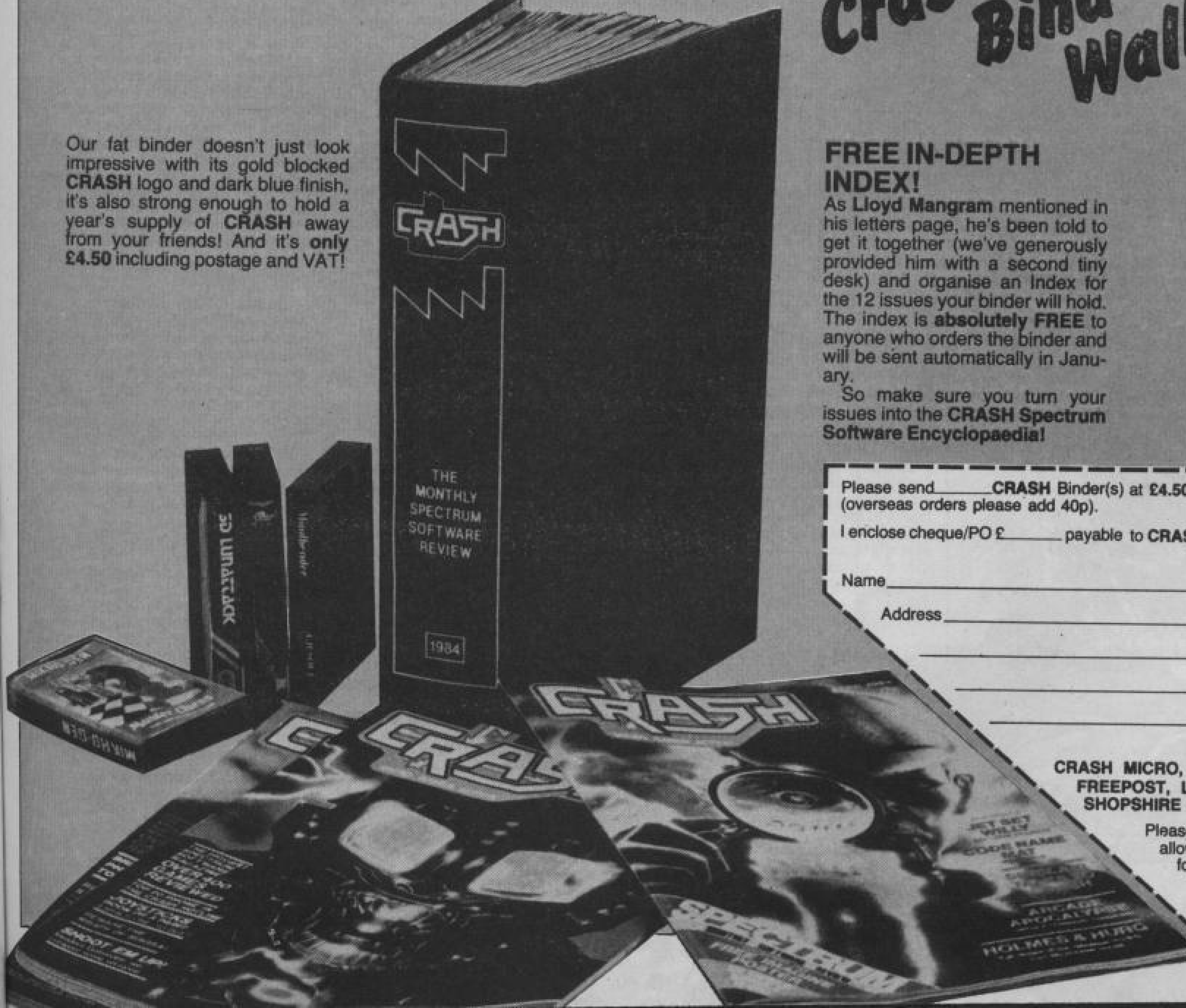
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FREE IN-DEPTH INDEX!

As **Lloyd Mangram** mentioned in his letters page, he's been told to get it together (we've generously provided him with a second tiny desk) and organise an Index for the 12 issues your binder will hold. The index is **absolutely FREE** to anyone who orders the binder and will be sent automatically in January.

So make sure you turn your issues into the **CRASH Spectrum Software Encyclopaedia!**

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various joints, raiding those of your rivals, bribing the appropriate authorities, assassinating your rival gang leaders and generally carrying on like an utter rotter. The success of your gang will rely heavily on their numbers, equipment and morale, all of which must be carefully regulated. The game follows the traditional strategy formula of option menus and results. The Moral Majority are unlikely to approve! Good value. Overall CRASH rating 59%. Offers 9 skill levels. BASIC.

GREAT BRITAIN LTD

Producer: Simon Hessel, 48K £6.95

You are Prime Minister of Great Britain and your aim is to stay in power as long as you can. Having chosen which party you wish to represent you are presented with the state of the nation, the rate of inflation, unemployment rate, exchange rate for the pound and dollar, your popularity rating, nation's balance at the bank and so on. Factors taken into account are population figures and relationship of OAPs to children, number of compnies in business, tax income from various sources, expenditure for the previous year, and the prices of commodities. The general aim is to work towards the General Election and win it. A highly complex program which takes you to the thrills of Election Night — and beyond (if you're a success). Recommended.

GENERAL ELECTION

Producer: Buy-Byte, 48K £6.95
Author: I Wason and D Wolff

The object is to win more seats in parliament than your opposition (it's a realistic simulation anyway). There are 100 constituencies split up into five regions. In each region seats are graded as Very Safe, Safe, Marginal or Very Marginal. From the title card of Maggie shouting the game's title, it's all go. Unfortunately so much of the game is a dice-throwing board game and it's beset by piles of confusing instructions as complex as an explanation of Einstein's relativity laws. In the end, rather boring to play.

INHERITANCE

Producer: Simon Hessel, 48K £6.95

This is a two part game. Great Uncle Arbuthnot is dead and you inherit his entire estate, but first you must prove your financial acumen by turning £10,000 into £100,000 in 26 weeks by investing on the stock market and the Metal Exchange. You can also gamble at the casino or at the races. Only on completing part one can you load part two; here you have got the manor house plus its ailing soft drinks factory. The aim is to find the secret formula for Paradise Cola and successfully market the drink whilst coping with fires, strikes and frauds. The game is all text but it moves at a lively pace and is playable from the start.

IT'S ONLY ROCK 'N' ROLL

Producer: K-Tel, 48K £6.95 (3)

Part of a 'double bill' with *Tomb of Dracula*; neither side of this tape comes up to scratch. *It's Only Rock 'N' Roll* purports to be the sort of strategy game where you pit your wits against the established music industry to become a pop star. Having chosen a name for yourself you can do concerts, tours, make records, buy status symbols, write and record or sell songs, and hire yourself a manager. With the money you have at the start doing any of these things except hiring a flea-bitten manager is out of the question. Select CONCERT and you'll be told busking is more your line. The song writing facility is the only lively element in what is otherwise tedious and unrealistic. Overall CRASH rating 41%. BASIC.

JERICHO 2

Producer: Elephant, 48K £5.55

A text strategy game in which you, as Joshua, have a go at bringing down the walls of Jericho. You are provided with certain siege implements like ballistae, battering rams, towers and carts, plus 300 men. The art is to assign men to particular tasks while juggling with the necessities of building further siege engines, gathering the material for them, keeping food supplies up and attacking the weak points of the walled city. Unfed men desert — it's a tough life.

JIGSAW

Producer: Artic, 48K, £5.95

As the title says, this is a computer jigsaw puzzle. The program contains 2 pictures, an old steam train and St George and the Dragon. Both graphics are very nicely done and can be seen for a flash during the loading, or on pressing the Help key. During play the pictures are divided up into squares and muddled up. You use the cursor keys to shuffle them into the correct sequences. Depending on the selected skill level there are more or less squares to shuffle. Our reviewers found the game amusing and difficult at first, but unable to hold the attention for long. Overall CRASH rating 47%. A game with a difference and likely to appeal to puzzlers.

JOHNNY REB

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50

Lothlorien specialise in battle strategy war games which require hours to play properly, involving military units of varying strengths and related weaponry. Each player in turn is allowed to move some or all of his units their pre-ordained number of squares, and then use them to attack. The game is set in the American Civil War and the idea is to capture the enemy unit's flag. The graphics tend to be small to fit in everything and it takes some time to get the hang of how to play, but once that's done there's hours of fun if you like war strategy games. It has proved very popular.

LOJIX

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: Stephen Webb

This is a puzzle game where the object is to fit 22 irregularly shaped pieces into a square shaped grid. On the left is the blank grid, and to the right the 22 vari-coloured shapes, each identified by a letter of of the alphabet. To fit a piece you select the one you want by pressing the appropriate key, whereupon a black cursor dot appears in the grid which can be moved by using the cursors to the centre of where you want the shape fitted (this is the grid square which corresponds to the square in the shape where its identifying letter is situated). The shape may be rotated before fitting using key 9. It may also be removed from the grid by using key R. Looks simple but is likely to take a player a long time to sort out and if you like these puzzles, offers good value. Overall CRASH rating 53%. M/C.

LOST

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: John Hunt

Lost is a graphics survival adventure. You are lost in a forest clearing, surrounded by mountains with only 5 days supply of food. There are animals and snakes which pop up now and again and may be killed if you're quick enough off the mark — or they may get you. A complex list of graphic symbols at the start tells you what you are seeing, fruit trees, caves, water, settlements etc. You can move 4 characters at a time, but this allowance decreases over poor terrain. Weather plays an important role and between each move the weather forecast is displayed. This is built up so slowly it renders the game almost unplayable after a few minutes. Colour, graphics and sound are all quite well though out, but in the end it becomes more baffling than enjoyable. Keyboard response is poor, no joystick option general rating: average. CRASH overall 57%. BASIC.

1984

Producer: Incentive, 48K £5.50 (2)
Author: R. Carter

The time is now. Can you do better than Maggie and ride out three terms as Prime Minister and survive two General Elections? This highly complex strategy game runs along conventional lines of offering a menu of options and problems to be solved. You will have to balance the books over such matters as VAT, Income Tax, Govt Loans and Contracts, Corporation Tax, Grants to Industry, Public sector spending, Govt wages, Pensions, Unemployment Benefit, Child Allowances, Foreign Aid and interest on borrowing. The personalities involved bring you into constant conflict over things like wage demands. The game is accompanied by a booklet called 'A Pocket Guide To Running Britain'. The text is clearly laid out and responds fast to inputs. This is no toy government game, but a fully blown program that should tax anyone's brain. Overall CRASH rating 76%, machine code.

PARAS

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50

If you enjoyed 'Redweed' or 'Johnny Reb' then you will find Paras a suitable follow up. The object is to bring the war to a swift close by destroying the enemy's line of communication — a bridge. To do this your 15 men are dropped behind enemy lines. They may be equipped with 5 different weapons and an unlimited number of grenades. As in the previous war games each man may be moved according to a strict table of squares allowed, and then allowed to fire before the enemy get their turn. Unlike the 2 previous titles, Paras has far more complexities built in and will provide endless fun for war game addicts. Bright graphics, but many symbols to digest. Good instructions enclosed on a leaflet.

PLUNDER

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Author: D G Evans

Plunder is a pretty massive strategy game where you find yourself in command of a British Galleon with the object of stopping the Spaniards from running gold from the New Lands to Spain. There is a short, medium and long game option with 3 skill levels for each. The screen gives you a high resolution map of the North Atlantic, divided into squares by a grid. You move your ship about with the cursors, seeking enemy galleons, troopships and battleships. If one is encountered you may attack or retreat. Attacking gives the option of firing or boarding or both. Firing on a galleon may be a mistake — if it sinks then you lose its gold. Depending on your battle success the morale factor of your crew goes up or down. There are several ports open to you which must be entered via an arcade style sequence for docking. In port you may take on extra crew or weaponry, have repairs made, buy food, jewels or opium, or sell if you already have any. The display informs you at all times of the gold stopped, gold acquired and spent, weather conditions (which affect finding enemy shippping), number of victories, men lost, ships sunk and so on. The length of the game is determined by the number of moves you make, and these are also displayed. All in all, an entertaining game, but one that can become repetitive with playing.

PRINT SHOP

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00

Another standard from CCS in which you get only 12 weeks to make the profit which will stop the bank from closing down your printing business. Work scheduling, staffing, purchasing and estimating to clients for their work are aimed to test your business acumen to the hilt. Each month you receive a balance sheet to see how well you have done. This is a text game with option menus.

PRIVATEER

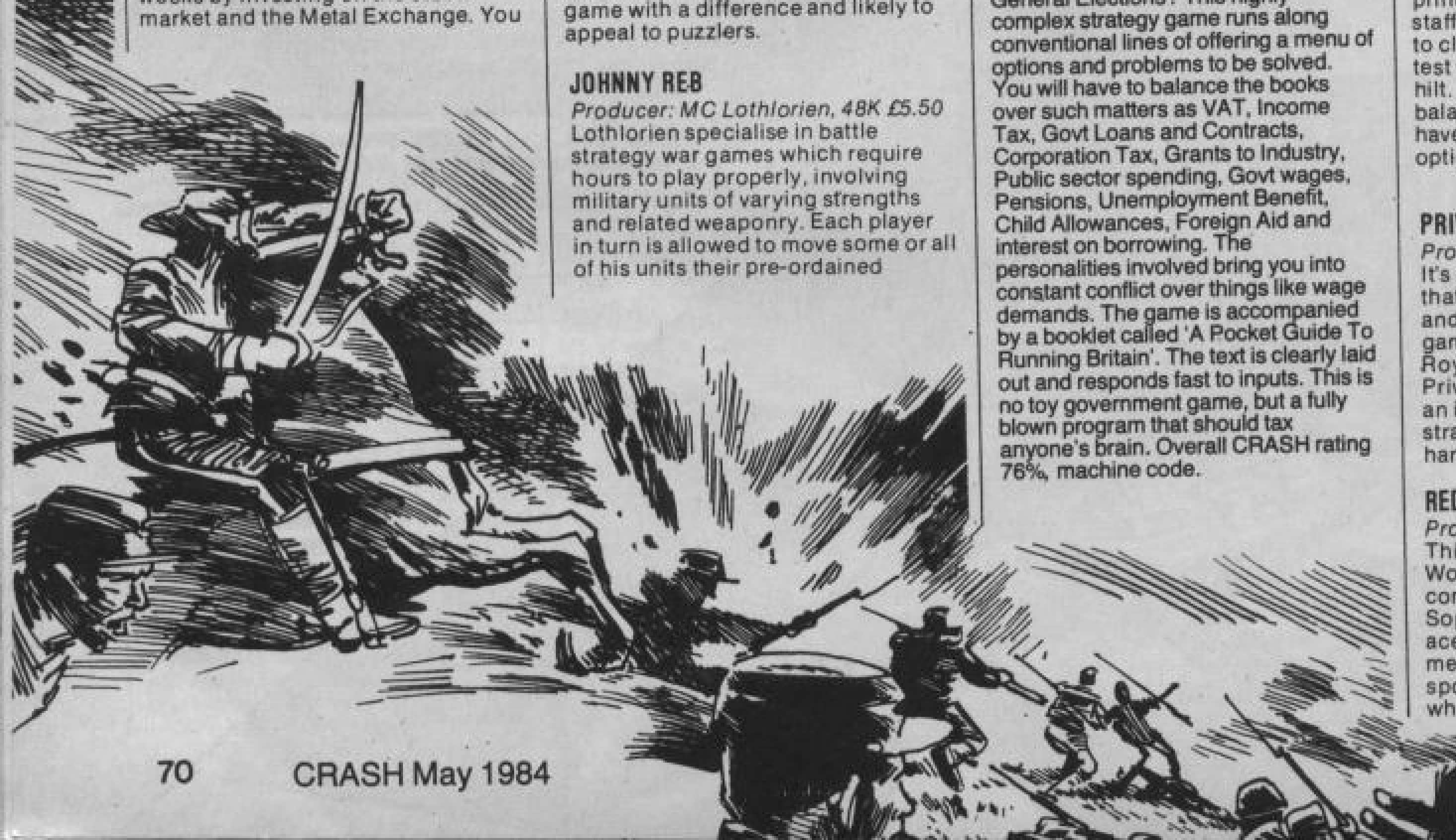
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £4.50

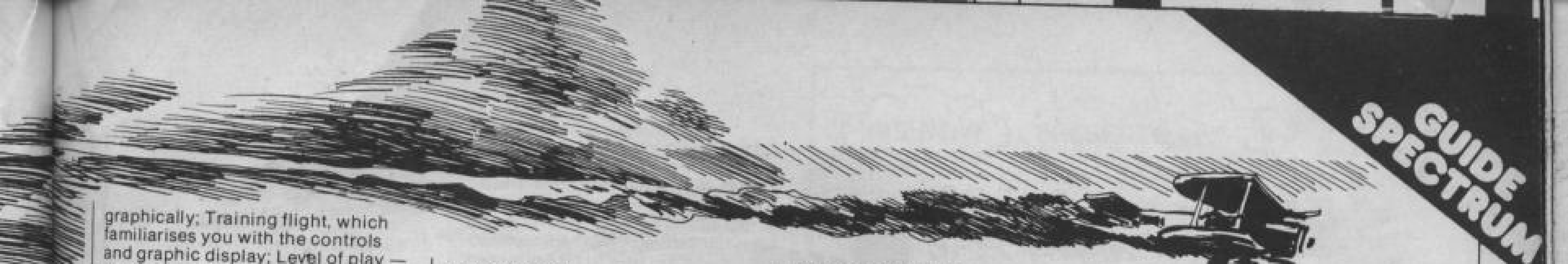
It's a good price but reflects the fact that this is an updated ZX81 program and looks like it. A 3-phase naval war game which gives you command of a Royal Navy ship fighting French Privateers. It is a suitable game for an introduction into the whole battle strategy area, but too simple for hardened veterans.

RED BARON

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50

This is a real time simulation of World War I plane to plane aerial combat with you, as the pilot of a Sopwith Camel, pitted against air aces of the German airforce. A main menu offers 6 options; Enemy plane spotting, which at length shows you what an enemy plane is doing





graphically; Training flight, which familiarises you with the controls and graphic display; Level of play — there are 19; Campaign game, in which enemy planes are sent up against you; Design your own game, where you can alter the specifications of the planes and plots; and Quit. The main problem with what might be a really good game, is that the cockpit view is very disorienting. If an enemy is behind you, you get a view over the back of your plane, which doesn't seem very realistic — it's almost as though you were flying backwards, or sideways if you look left or right. Controlling your aircraft takes some getting used to and the real time element is likely to put off shoot em up addicts. However, for those who enjoy simulations, this one represents fairly good value for money.

REDWEED

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50
A scenario borrowed from H G Wells puts you in charge of London's defence against the invading Martian war machines, whilst semi-sentient Redweed threatens to put your units out of action as it grows across the map. You have many and varied units from heavy artillery to flamethrowers (used against the redweed). Your enemy is three war machines and your task is to out think them. Small but effective graphics and a menu driven game where you and the Martians take your turns in a very civilised manner. Fifteen skill levels to test your tactical abilities. Good value for this popular game.

REFLECTIONS

Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
Author: Brian Neenan
This is an original strategy/puzzle game where you must move a torch around the edges of a 12 by 12 grid and discover the locations of invisible mirrors by seeing where the torch beam is reflected. You can select between 10 and 39 mirrors. If the beam is reflected when 'fired' you may then elect to guess the cell in which the mirror is placed and then its angle. If you are wrong you lose points and you spend a point for every firing of the torch. The graphics are simple but effective and it requires quite a bit of thinking. Likely to pall with much playing however. Overall CRASH rating 50%. M/C.

ROMAN EMPIRE

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
In this cast of thousands it is the first century BC and you are the Emperor. (A working knowledge of 'I Claudius' might be useful but isn't essential)! What you have to do is simply conquer ten countries which hate you, and do this wiping out their troops (under-paid and under-trained) with your 90,000 men. There are nine generals on your side, including yourself, and 18 legions of 5,000 men each. The idea is to build up armies from the men, appoint generals and launch campaigns to persuade the barbarian hordes how wonderful life under the yoke can be. Three levels of difficulty.

SAMURAI WARRIOR

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
You are a Samurai warrior living during the Kamakura period in Japan (1185-1333). There are no bonus points for killing Richard Chamberlain, but there are for defeating your opponents and surviving into old age. You can, of course, commit Seppuku if you would rather. Up against you are six groups of bandits and nine other samurai of differing abilities, any of whom may be superior to yourself. Challenges and hunts occur in simple graphics and are not very good. Results are in direct relation to the combatants' strengths. Seems pointless.

SHEEPWALK

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
This can't go under an 'arcade' heading and should probably be consigned to the dustbin anyway. But if anything does come into this game it is a touch of strategy and a hell of a lot of luck. The object is to get your electronic collie dog to herd a load of sheep into a pen and prevent them drowning or chomping the crops. It's all incredibly slow and tedious to play, and very BASIC.

SHIP OF THE LINE

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
You an officer in the Royal Navy or the 17th Century, in command of a ship of the line in the Mediterranean, and the object is to do battle with other ships in order to win favour with your superiors. The ship in question is a cutter with a crew of 50. Pressing any key gives you a graphic view of the sea. If a ship is sighted you may engage her or run. Should you engage you are told the enemy's strength. If you win the encounter you may sink the ship or it may surrender, in which case you win prize money. All in all a rather simple and undemanding game with few thrills.

SMUGGLER'S COVE

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
It's 1753 and you are on a hunt for Blackbeard's famous treasure, hidden in a complex of caves on the north Cornish Coast. The program burbles away at you in pirateese of the 'Argh, Jim lad, me scupper, there 'e be,' type. The top half of the screen contains well designed and instantly appearing location graphics, but the game gets nowhere. It seems impossible to get beyond the first few locations and then it ceases to be any fun.

SPECTRUM SAFARI

Producer: A J Rushton, 48K £5.95
I've been told that this game is now marketed by C D S Micro Systems, but they haven't confirmed that yet. In any event it is a jolly and original mixture of arcade bits with text/graphics adventure which should keep you on your toes unless you're a D&D purist. The idea is to



take your party of stranded explorers across an island infested with highly intelligent wildlife with university degrees, and beset with natives who want to barter away their food and men to replace that eaten by the men or the intelligent wildlife. Once you have visited a village it disappears forever, presumably wiped out through lack of resistance to some vile white man's disease, but it teaches you caution in your bargaining, if you're getting short of explorers (lives) in your party. Losing them all means death to the player. The main object is to find the only boat, buy it and sail away from this Magnus Magnusson madhouse. Every animal encountered has some problem for you; sometimes its an arcade style situation, sometimes they want to know the answer to a difficult mathematical problem. If you fail a member of your party gets eaten. Nice clear graphics and a veritable MGM musical score makes this a very enjoyable game.
Recommended.

SUPER SPY
Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
Cross and recross the world in search of Dr Death's secret island lair. Full of coded messages and puzzles, mysterious packages, waitresses, hotel managers, taxi cab drivers and the like. Be wary of parcels and flowers that explode and watch out for Dr Death's horrid little midget. It could be a lively and fun game to play, but in the end it settles for mere confusion which tends to wear the player down. If you like this type of game, probably worth it.

TIMEQUEST
Producer: Midrogen, 48K £5.95
This is a game in which you must find the pieces of your craft which have been scattered throughout time owing to an accident in warp-space. Thorughout your quest you must defend yourself from the inhabitants of that time, such as a bunch of Roman soldiers in 137 AD. The screen displays your attackers, weapons you may pick up, and the salvagable bits of your craft as well as yourself. To the right is a status table and below a series of text options which are activated by pressing the desired initial letter. These options allow you to move across the screen, choose the direction, and attack, pick up, change weapons and so on. The game has very limited graphics and is neither arcade nor really an adventure. It claims to be in real time (a clock ticks away with every move made) but as it's staged across eons of time this is scarcely possible. Poor. Overall CRASH rating 33%. BASIC.

VALHALLA
Producer: Legend, 48K £14.95 (1)
Valhalla is much too lengthy and complicated to go into in a brief review. It boasts the best animated graphics in an adventure yet, numerous locations, lots and lots of inter-reactive characters who carry on with or without you, and kill each other off all over the place. Interrupt-operated text input allows you to type in commands while other actions are taking place and the program accepts quite complicated sentences. There are six separate but linked quests, although much fun may be had just living life as it comes in Valhalla. Accompanied by an excellent book which tells you all you need to know in no-nonsense language. Expensive but worth it, although there were mixed feelings about the ultimate value of the game's central objectives. OVerall CRASH rating 82%. M/C.

SMUGGLER
Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Author: P A Hainsworth
The inlay says that skill, inspiration and calculated risk are the main ingredients of success. Five levels of play allow you to move and store goods, buy goods, sell them, buy a boat, sail it, and consult the bank. It is the 19th century and the object is to amass a fortune of £250,000 by smuggling goods in from the Mediterranean (avoiding Ships of the Line). Factors to juggle with include crew costs, commodity costs, port dues, maintenance costs, size of vessel and how far it can safely travel and at what loading. Random elements include the weather, which may sink your vessel or run it aground, and there are always the priates to watch out for.

TYRANT OF ATHENS
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
Another text strategy game from Lothlorien. It's the fifth century BC and Athens is beset by hostile armies and fleets from other powerful Greek states as well as the Persians. All you have to do is survive long enough to turn Athens into the most feared state in the Mediterranean by building warships, training troops and fighting battles by sea and by land. No mention of democracy here, and philosophy's strictly for the cissies. Not one of their best games, but reasonably playable.

WARLORD
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50
This might be seen as a sequel to 'Samurai Warrior' as it is set in the same country and the same period of time. You rule a small coastal village which supports itself by slave labour and by raiding other small villages. In turn your village may be raided by other villages or by the pirates off the coast. This is a considerably expanded game compared to 'Samurai Warrior'. Menu options allow you to train troops from your villagers, set some aside for land cultivation, hire mercenaries, attack pirates, raid other villages, hire samurai and build ships. Text only game. Average fun.

ADVENTURE GAMES

Adventure games come in all shapes and sizes. They are text-oriented, although graphics are often added, sometimes for a pretty effect, sometimes as an integral part of the game with clues not in the text. There are also an increasing number of 'graphic adventures' which combine the adventure format with arcade style graphics. They are all linked by the common theme of a quest, a search for some object or aim through many locations.

ABYSS
Producer: CCS, 48K £5.00
In a hidden gorge through the Mountain of the Golden Lion, lies the forgotten ABYSS. But brave and foolhardy adventurers like you sometimes strive to cross it, their sole aim to destroy the many evil monsters that lurk in the shadows, waiting for the next meal to come strolling across the many bridges in the ABYSS. Scenario over, the game begins. The screen presents you with a yellow grid, each crossing point being a 'lurking' place. Movement is done by the cursors until you encounter a monster. These tend to offer you a range of problems, like the Ogre who can't get his sums right—can you in 15 seconds? Or the arcade sequence where you must hit five falling spiders before they reach the cave floor. Added dangers are creaky bridges that may collabpse under you. By no means a traditional D&D adventure, but certainly one for quick thinking swots with 'O' levels to pass! Good value for the price and not at all easy.

ARROW OF DEATH (pt 1)
Producer: Digital Fantasia, 48K £9.95
Author: Brian Howarth
The follow up to *Golden Baton*, and the worshipped rod's famous glow has been stolen. It's your task to rescue it with the aid of a magical arrow. Part 1 requires you to find the whereabouts of the parts which make up the arrow. You start in a palace with a dead messenger in front of you who wears an amulet around his arm bearing the shape of a barge. The King's sorceror has been unable to vanquish the evil that has stolen the glow – how can you? One of the toughest assignments from the pen of Brian Howarth. Overall CRASH rating 68%.



ARROW OF DEATH (pt 2)
Producer: Digital Fantasia, 48K £9.95
Author: Brian Howarth
Having collected the various bits of the magical arrow you find yourself on the fringes of the Marsh of Desolation, seeking the one man who is able to create the arrow whole, Arnid, the royal fletcher. With the arrow, you will then be able to undertake the defeat of the evil Xerdon, the monster who has stolen the Golden Baton's glow. Unfortunately, Xerdon's minions have kidnapped Ardid. Problems all the way of course. Overall CRASH rating 69%.

BLACK CRYSTAL
Producer: Carnell, 48K £7.50
A mammoth undertaking and one of the earliest 'big' adventures. It features graphics filling most of the screen, showing a map of the various landscapes. Choose what character you want to be and then wade in to fight the monsters. Far too complex to do justice to in this space, but if you are to play it set aside hours for contemplation of the book (or novel one might say) which explains everything. Indeed, you are recommended to save the game at various stages and think over the day's events before plunging in.
Recommended.

BYTE
Producer: CCS, 48K £5.00 (1)
Author: O&S Ben-Ami
This is a text-with-some-graphics adventure, where the battle field is the depths of a 3D maze in which various computer components must be located to build your own computer. They may be lying about, they may be hidden and generally they are defended by all sorts of electronic monsters you must defeat to remain alive and progress. The seven skill levels are neatly categorised by the sophistication of the computer you want to build, each having its own strength characteristics. Battles with the monsters may take the form of mental bouts like spelling tests or maths questions, or they may be physical where, for instance, you may have to do semi-arcade battles with cross bows or swords. Graphically the text is pretty clear, but the inputting of commands is rather irritating and there's too much reverse flashing going on which tires the eye. Medium fast response times. Overall CRASH rating 58%, average. BASIC.

CAMELOT
CCS, 48K £5.00
Author: C Chapman & G Brooks
You are Arthur Pendragon, banished from Camelot by the wicked Black Knight, but an unknown ally has loaned you 50 bags of gold pieces. You must travel around and collect seven items that are hidden in various countries. Three baazars exist where you may buy items to help you, and there are other items hidden that may help you overcome problems. The object is to collect the seven items and re-enter Camelot to be crowned King. This is a graphics adventure where you move Arthur and his band of warriors around a map by using keys N,S,E,W. At each step the scene cuts to a graphic representing castles, towns and different types of landscape. In each there is some problem to overcome, like a band of brigands whom you may fight or flee. Battle strength and helpful objects already collected help determine the outcome. Should you win there is a search option for more useful items. The graphics are

bright and clear, response times are fairly good and this unconventinal adventure might well make an attractive change from the usual.

CASTLE BLACKSTAR

Producer: SCR Adventures, 48K £8.95 (3)
Author: Sheppard, Cummins & Richardson

A text-only adventure, and first of a planned series of Artemis Quests. The Goddess Artemis, glimpsed in a dream, bids you enter Castle Blackstar to recover her power orb from the vast underground caverns. To achieve maximum points all treasures found must be cleansed of their evil, all puzzles solved and the orb returned. Location descriptions are detailed and atmospheric and response times are machine code fast with a touch of humour. The development of cause and effect is pretty advanced with situations like the turning of a winch in one room, causing the raising of a chandelier in another far away. Perhaps the only drawback is the rather steep price in comparison to many other similar adventures, so a low rating on value for money, but overall a CRASH rating of 75%.

CASTLE COLDITZ

Producer: K-Tel, 48K £6.95 (3)

On the same cassette comes *Battle of the Toothpaste Tubes*, an arcade game of reasonable quality, and just as well as the adventure based on escaping from the famous World War II German prison camp is pathetic. Location descriptions are sparse and uninteresting, the logic of where you can go and what you may find is daft. A total waste of time and money. CRASH rating – below 20%.

CIRCUS

Producer: Digital Fantasia, 48K £9.95
Author: Brian Howarth

Digital Fantasia specialise in marketing adventure games, a unique feature of which is that you may have the graphics switched on or off. Things move faster with them off, especially as the Hi-res drawings do take a bit of time to appear. On the other hand, there are often clues in the graphics which aren't apparent in the text. *Circus* is number 6 in the series, and starts off when your car runs out of petrol in the middle of nowhere. You search for help on foot and come across a noisy circus, apparently in full swing, miles from anywhere. As you enter the jolly place, all the sound and lights die. The big top is a graveyard of evil spirits. It's nice to stumble across a generator, as wandering around the darkness inside the tent can prove fatal. But nothing is so simple – the generator won't work without a cable plugged in to feed the lights. Clowns leave messages, tightrope walking requires a safety net, can you be a human cannonball? An addictive game which requires a good memory and plenty of ingenuity. Overall CRASH rating 75%, machine code.

CLASSIC ADVENTURE

Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £6.95
Author: John Jones-Steele

Also known as Adventure 1 by Abersoft, who originally marketed this adventure through CP Software under the title of Colossal Caves, Classic Adventure was originally written in the 70s in Fortran and took up over 200K of memory. As the name suggests, this is the epitome of traditional D & D adventures. You must find a treasure of untold riches by penetrating a deadly complex of caverns. When the game starts you are standing by a brick building which must be entered, and where you will find a number of objects to help you in your quest. Then the entry to the caverns must be discovered. On your travels you will meet giant snakes, trolls, dragons and other wierd creatures. Although requiring some careful thought, most of the puzzles presented are easily overcome. A fast moving and enjoyable adventure.

COLOSSAL ADVENTURE

Producer: Level 9 Computing, 48K £9.90

Discover the fifteen hidden treasures, rescue two groups of captured elves and then try to find the cave exit through a massive complex of passages, tunnels and rooms. During this major quest you will have to kill many wandering dwarves with your axe, get a knife thrown at you, stumble across the elves' crown jewels and make sure that the batteries of your light don't run out. Coins from one of the treasures may be used in a vending machine for more batteries, otherwise it's the pits! Watch out for those pits in the dark! Like other Level 9 adventures, this one is all text and very large. Locations are magically described and the keyboard responses are good. You are only allowed to carry four objects at a time, so much time and battery life is wasted transporting useful items from place to place, dropping them and then going back for them when they are needed. Recommended.

COLOSSAL CAVES

Producer: C P Software, 48K £7.95
Author: Abersoft

Alsknown as Adventure 1 by Abersoft, this is a traditional style adventure where you must find the treasure left behind by a Wizard, and in which you will meet dragons, trolls, snakes and other dark denizens. When the program has finished loading the adventure begins instantly without instructions. These are available on command. The game is strictly text only and uses repeat locations when travelling along, say, a valley. Finding the cave in the first place is already an adventure in itself, and the whole game may take days, even weeks to complete satisfactorily. One of the classic computer adventure games. Recommended.

DENIS THROUGH THE DRINKING GLASS

Producer: Applications, 48K £5.50 (3)

If mythical dragons have become the bane of you life, try pitting you wits against a real monster in this compelling, witty and difficult game. You must guide Denis Thatcher through life, avoiding the icy blast of Maggie as she prepares another Prime Ministerial speech at Number 10. Denis just wants to get out to his favourite pub, the Gravediggers Arms, but Maggie's in the way and Denis has a severe drinking problem – if he doesn't get a slug of gin within 10 moves, he's as good as dead. Location descriptions are all rendered in rhyme and tend to offer a jaundiced view of political life. Early attempts at escape may well end up with you photographed on the front doorstep of Number 10 nude – did you forget to get dressed! Finding the gin is a tough assignment and the HELP facility only tends to be helpfully rude. A prompt of 'BALLS!' turns out to refer to the golf balls which you have forgotten, and 'Get Knotted' suggests that sheets may make a rope. You're not likely to get bored, but there's always a volume of Kropotkin's Memoirs to while away a few seconds between dying for a lack of gin. Very fast responses with this Quill-written game, and highly recommended. Overall CRASH rating 83%, machine code.

DEVILS OF THE DEEP

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50

A 3D graphic adventure where you move your undersea diver along the sea bed avoiding electric eels and crabs, collect useful items like harpoon guns and harpoons, knives and compasses, and try to collect the treasure hidden somewhere. There are 100 screens to be traversed. The idea is a good one but

the graphics are uninspiring and very, very slow. Long load and minutes to wait if you are killed before another game may be played. Below average.

DODGE CITY

Producer: Phoenix, 48K £9.99
Author: Fraser Orr
For adventurers, the problem with this game is that to load the adventure you must first win through 12 levels of an arcade game where baddies chase your pony express rider. Completing the 12 levels results in a running code for the adventure as well as some vital clues. Your task is to prove you innocence of the murder of the deputy sherrif who has been found dead in your hotel room with you holding the gun that did it. It is an option menu graphic adventure with each situation offering two or three choices of action. Overall CRASH rating of 57%, machine code.

DUNGEONS OF DOOM

Producer: Temptation, 48K £5.95
This is meant to contain two games —either you enter and progress down through the dungeons, or you start at the bottom and try to get out. I thought that it was generally the case with any adventure. It's meant to be a graphic adventure, but the graphics ar restricted to black on green squares representing the room you are in and the ones near to it. Monsters appear in text only and seem dispiritingly easy to kill off. Slow responses and few thrills make this a beginners-only introduction game.

ESPIONAGE ISLAND

Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
Artic have produced five text only adventures to date, lettered A to E. This is 'D'. Despite or because of, the lack of pictures, all their adventures are dripping with verbal atmosphere. They contain endless locations, options, puzzles to solve and are never afraid of the most obscure or most obvious of solutions. Always excellent value. In this game you are on a reconnaisssance flight to spy on an enemy island when you are hit by fire. The adventure begins in the plane as it plunges earthwards. There are many tangles with the parachute before you reach the ground — just grabbing it and opening the fuselage door results in a nasty red mess on the ground! From there on you must make your way to the heart of the enemy stronghold, secure information, and return to your aircraft carrier in disguise, avoiding being shot by your own side. Biggles lives again! Clear writing and fast responses combined with a variable element in replay, make this a very worthwhile buy. Save game feature.

FAUST'S FOLLY

Producer: Abbex, 16K £5.95
Faust's Folly is buried somewhere in this congenial game with fast response times and some graphic additions. Once you have sorted out the vocab and found the entrance to the underground complex, it's a matter of the correct implements being picked up. The computer tells you that it isn't very intelligent (whatever Sinclair may tell you) and it may not know which way is which without a compass to help. In almost any location you can go in eight directions, so don't get lost. Very good for 16K.

GHOST TOWN

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: John Pickford
Ghost Town is a pretty accurate copy of Phipps Associates' 'Greedy Gulch', but it's nowhere near as much fun. There's the same old empty town with a sequential map showing the locations of the various establishments where useful items and information may be found to help you locate the gold mine in the desert. Once in the desert there don't seem to be any graphics worth speaking of. At least the text is nicely written and the response times are very good. But if I had to choose it would be 'Greedy Gulch'. Overall CRASH rating 43%. BASIC.

GOLDEN APPLE

Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
Author: Simon Wadsworth
Adventure 'E' is the latest from Artic and its title card explains this text only adventure very well — a large mansion, a ship and a mountainous island in the distance. Looks easy until you start. The object is to find 13 secret objects, find a safe place to store them in and do this through tons of locations. Finding a key can be hard enough, but the key you need near the start of this game is hidden in a very obvious place — so obvious you would never think of looking there until you sneezed after sniffing the — no I musn't give any secrets away. Absorbing!

GOLDEN BATON

Producer: Digital Fantasia, 48K £9.95
Author: Brian Howarth
The object of the title of this excellent adventure has been stolen from the palace where itis normally kept. As it is a priceless artifact which has been worshipped by your race for years, you are sent out to find it. The game begins in a dense, spooky wood and you are standing next to a tattered cloak and a pile of rotting leaves. During the quest you will encounter a wolf, a carvivorous crab, a lizard man and the Gorgon among many other eerie nasties. The ingenuity with which Brian Howarth spins both plot and logic keeps you on the edge of your seat. The graphics are somewhat simple, but the strength of these games lies in their text. Three sequels follow on from *The Golden Baton: Arrow of Death* (parts 1 and 2) and *The Wizard of Akyrz*. CRASH rating 68%.

GREEDY GULCH

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £4.95
The town of the title is a ghost town set in the Wild West, deserted now the gold workings have run out. But there is a mine out in the neighbouring desert which still has a fortune tucked away. The problem is to find the right map, get something to carry water in and fill it, find a gun for protection and then get to the mine and back. Whilst not a massively demanding adventure, it's certainly an absorbing one. The graphics show you the map of Greedy Gulch itself, or parts of it, with some location graphics in the desert. There are several mysterious appearances by someone you only see out of the corner of your eye. Some problems are simpler to overcome than you might suppose —confronted by a crevass and carrying a plank which wouldn't bridge it, jumping across solved the problem! Good value.

GROUCHO

Producer: Automata, 84K £10.00 (1)
Author: Piman
The full title of this ditty is, 'My Name Is Uncle Groucho You Win A Fat Cigar,' but that's much to long to ever repeat again! Like their famous Pimania, the object is to wade through a drug-induced landscape of weirdness and insanity, which is supposed to represent America, in the company of Groucho Marx and his companion the Piman, discover the secret identity of a famous Hollywood star which is hidden in the game, and then win the fabulous prize of a trip to Hollywood to meet the star in question, flying out on Concorde and coming back on the QE2. A rags to riches story for someone. Entries before 1 June. Naturally, you've got to be solid bonkers to get it right, and a pimaniac to boot. Good fun despite the slow response times. Excellent graphics and sound. Overall CRASH rating 67%. BASIC.

HOBBIT

Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £14.95
To date the great adventure, based on the famous Tolkien novel of the same name, which is included for the price. This game has a largish vocabulary and allows sentence with link words. Artificial intelligence of a kind enlivens the action as the characters continue their lives regardless of what you do. It's possible to inter-relate with them to some degree, depending on their feelings towards you. Some even get killed without you knowing about it until you stumble across their bodies! I've forgotten what the quest is, but it's hardly important — playing the game is. Very long and totally absorbing. A classic.

HUMMER HOUSE OF HORROR

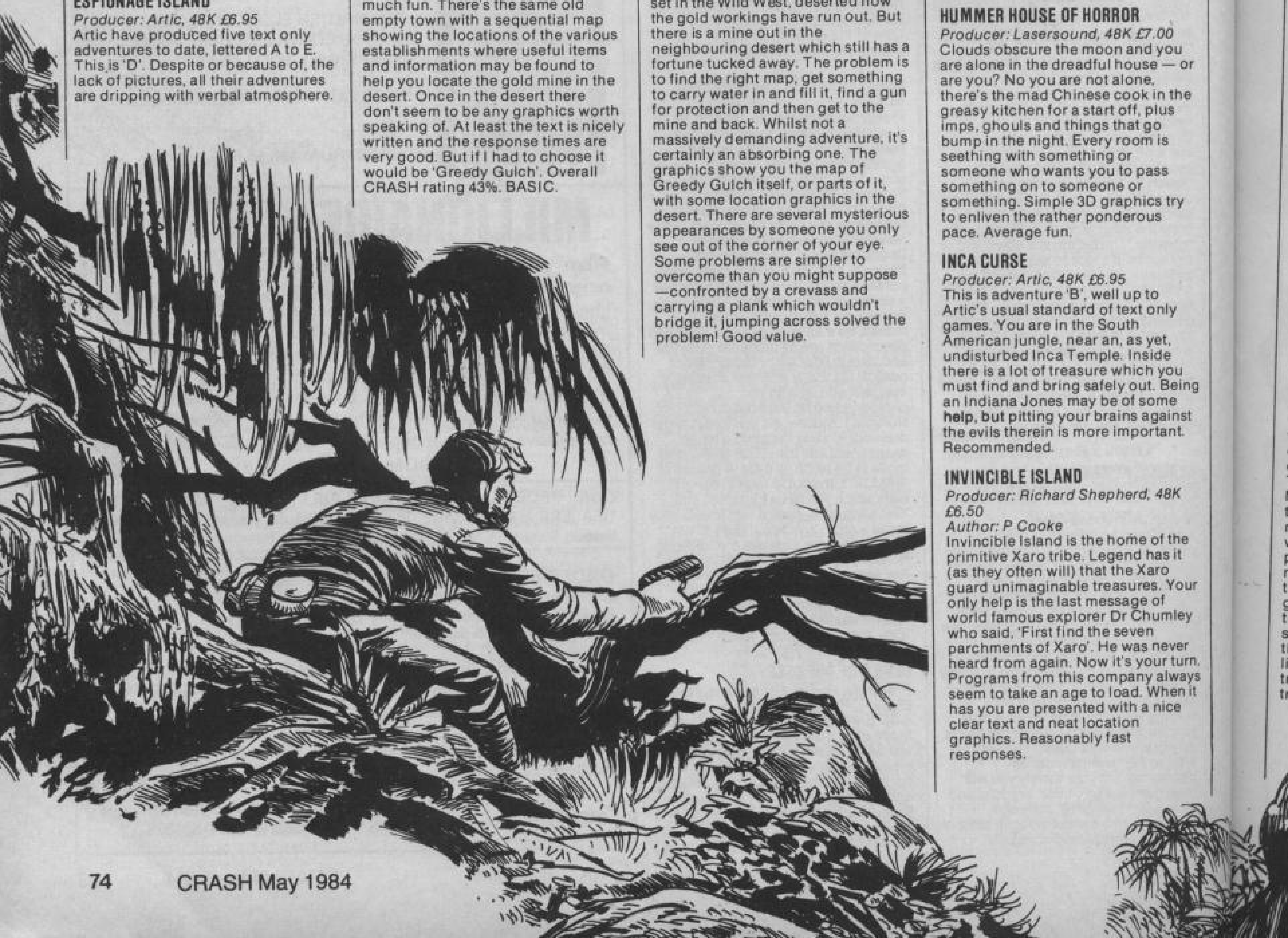
Producer: Lasersound, 48K £7.00
Clouds obscure the moon and you are alone in the dreadful house — or are you? No you are not alone, there's the mad Chinese cook in the greasy kitchen for a start off, plus imps, ghouls and things that go bump in the night. Every room is seething with something or someone who wants you to pass something on to someone or something. Simple 3D graphics try to enliven the rather ponderous pace. Average fun.

INCA CURSE

Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
This is adventure 'B', well up to Artic's usual standard of text only games. You are in the South American jungle, near an, as yet, undisturbed Inca Temple. Inside there is a lot of treasure which you must find and bring safely out. Being an Indiana Jones may be of some help, but pitting your brains against the evils therein is more important. Recommended.

INVINCIBLE ISLAND

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
Author: P Cooke
Invincible Island is the home of the primitive Xaro tribe. Legend has it (as they often will) that the Xaro guard unimaginable treasures. Your only help is the last message of world famous explorer Dr Chumley who said, 'First find the seven parchments of Xaro'. He was never heard from again. Now it's your turn. Programs from this company always seem to take an age to load. When it has you are presented with a nice clear text and neat location graphics. Reasonably fast responses.



THE ISLAND

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: Martyn Davies

Apparently you live in a clutch of South Sea Islands, one of which contains gold. Find the map, find the correct island and get rich quick. A mostly text adventure with arcade sequences to add to the fun—that's the idea—the reality is something else. It's had one good review we've seen, but goodness knows why! This isn't a real adventure at all in the proper sense. You're led by the nose along the correct guessing path until you end up with an impossible arcade sequence which demands you sail your ship through a rock-infested sea. Deviation from the author's intended path results in terminating the game. Excellent response tiems to nowhere. Sorry, it's rubbish. Overall CRASH rating below 20%. M/C.

KNIGHT'S QUEST

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £5.95

Which Micro's reviewers got very angry about this game, because it is written in BASIC. Lots of adventure games are written in BASIC and are very good, if a little slow at times. The plot of Knight's Quest is a little thin and unoriginal however, a forerunner of their much better games. Some locations are simply illustrated with small graphics and there are the usual assortment of spells, weapons and monsters. Not all bad by any means.

LORDS OF TIME

Producer: Level 9 Computing, 48K £9.90 (3)

A band of evil Time Lords are plotting to alter the history of the world. You must travel back in time and collect nine crucial objects, each marked with the symbol of the hourglass, which, when they are put into a cauldron will be used to defeat the Time Lords. The game starts in your own living room and through a run down grandfather clock. The cogs inside are the key for travelling through to the many time zones – back to confront angry cave people – forward, where you may get lost among the stars. Once the nine objects have been located in whatever time zone they may be in, the cauldron must be found. The text creates a remarkable atmosphere with life-like descriptions. Includes a useful booklet of instructions and objectives. A brilliant adventure and highly recommended for a few weeks hard work.

MAD MARTHA

Producer: Mikrogen: 48K £6.95

To prove how much fun a BASIC written adventure can be try this little domestic ditty. As hen-pecked husband, Henry, steal your wife's money, creep out of the house without waking baby or tripping over the wailing moggy, and have a night out on the town at the casino and other similarly Unsavoury Places. The problem is that your wife, dear Martha, is an escapee from Friday the 13th Part Six 4D, a homicidal maniac with an axe! Good vocabulary and an invariable program that resembles a word maze. Getting things in absolutely the correct order is the name of the game here. But if you are too clever there are very tricky little arcade sequences included. To purists these may be upsetting, but they do liven up the adventure. If you have tried Mad Martha and enjoyed it then try ...

MAD MARTHA II

Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £6.95

Much the same mix as before, except this time Henry, Martha and son are on holiday in Spain. Martha has a half-cousin, a waiter called (wait for it) Manuel. Martha sets out on a bus tour with her son, leaving Manuel to keep an eye on Henry, who has a secret rendezvous with a Spanish penpal. Henry leaves their hotel with Manuel hot on his trail. Features a bull fight with Henry as a the star attraction. Not to be missed!

MAGIC MOUNTAIN

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £4.95

Seek out the Scroll of Wisdom in this text adventure with location graphics. There is the usual assortment of items and monsters, baffling puzzles and sudden deaths through inexperience. Reasonable graphics and medium fast response times. An average effort.

MINES OF SATURN

Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95

Includes part two — Return to Earth. You're making a routine orbit of Saturn when a radiation storm forces you to crash land on one of the moons. Luckily you come down near an abandoned mining base. Now you must set off in search of Di-Lithium crystals to refuel your standard ship. 'Return to Earth' gets you back in space and landing on an abandoned and damaged space station, looking for a means of communicating with Earth. Both adventures are very standard, with not many locations and irritating random elements over which you have no control. The games lack atmosphere and will not accept abbreviations making you type everything out. Tedious.



MINES OF MORIA

Producer: Severn, 16K £4.95
The Mines of Moria are the ancient home of Durin's folk from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. Long deserted, the mines contain old hoards of jewels and gold, guarded by the ancient and evil terrors of earlier ages. You're inside — the problem is getting out alive. Monsters include Trolls, Orcs, Balrogs or Wargs. Doors can be opened by force, spells or bribery of the door wards. Spells can be bargained for from wizards, and traders sell you wound ointment. Control is by the cursor keys, you can go up and down or use a warp which transports to other locations on a random floor. Watch out for the two-part load. The game itself is a mix. The screen shows you a plan of the floor with a list which lets you know the level you are on and room number occupied, weaponry and armorial status, number of wounds, strength, gold collected, jewels collected and spells available. A line at the bottom informs you of what's going on and asks whether or not to fight on meeting monsters. Rooms visited are plotted on the map, showing monsters encountered. It becomes difficult to manoeuvre after a while. A reasonable game.

MOUNTAINS OF KET

Producer: Incentive, 48K £5.50 (2)
This is part one of the 'Ket Trilogy'. Each part is a separate adventure in itself. Two weeks ago you were framed for murder and sentenced to death unless you undertook a dangerous mission – locate the secret entrance which lies at the base of the Mountains of Ket and which will let you reach the far side of the mountains. Many have tried and none returned. The computer takes the part of Edgar, an assassin bug which has been implanted in your neck to ensure your loyalty. The game starts on the edge of a village, some way from the mountains, where you may be able to collect some of the implements which will help ensure your survival, weapons, a horse and some food. Not much money hs been provided you, so the first adventuring tasks are discovering ways of getting the stolid villagers to part with the things you need. This is a text-only game in which any battles are described blow-by-blow, with your choice to break off it isn't going well. Instant response times, excellent descriptions and a sense of humour make this a very entertaining adventure with an overall CRASH ratingof 73%, machine code.

THE ORACLE'S CAVE

Producer: DORIC, 48K £7.95 (1)
Author: Chris Dorrell
Using the classic D&D format, this is an animated graphics adventure. You must seek the entrance to the caves in which you are trapped, collecting 40 units of treasure on your way. You must also collect treasure guarded by four special monsters, The Mummy, The Centaur, The Fiery Dragon or The Black Knight. With each game the layout of the caves is randomly generated to make each play different from the last. Commands are entered in resonse to a menu of limited options which allow you to move, rest, explore, use (a carried article) or, if in the presence of a monster, fight or run. If you elect to move the menu is replaced by another offering left/right/up/down. When 'you' move there is an animation sequence which is very well done, expecially the descent of stairs. The fights are fun, but you must watch your combat strength and that of your opponent very carefully. Another point is to use the explore facility all the while. The game grows on you as you begin to realise its potential. Reasonable response times, good graphics and good value for money. Overall CRASH rating 70%. BASIC.

PHARAOH'S TOMB

Producer: Phipps Associates: 48K £4.95
Make yourself rich by plundering a luxurious Pharaoh's tomb. Phipps have put together a well planned and sometimes amusing adventure game here, with text and location graphics, which are simply but attractive. Responses are very fast and the atmosphere draws you in again and again. Good value for money and well worth playing.

PIMANIA

Producer: Automata, 48K £10.00
There's not much to be said about Pimania, the game that launched overnight the insignificant Pi Man to fame and fortune. The game is wacky, daft, weird and infuriating by turns and to date the famous prize worth £6,000 (plus index linking) has not been won. Although it runs on standard adventure game lines it takes lateral thinking into the realms of higher (or perhaps camp) art. Slow responses but that hardly matters, Pimania is a disease which overcomes most things!

PLANET OF DEATH

Producer: Artic, 16K £6.95
Adventure 'A' finds you stranded on an alien planet and you must find your space ship. That's a pretty straightforward quest for once, but the route is far from straightforward. Atmospheric and chilling to play, you get drawn in by the words. Plenty of hazards to overcome. Good value.

QUEST

Producer: Hewson, 48K £5.95
Find a map hidden in a world inhabited by gruesome monsters guarding their territory and various pieces of treasure. To undertake the quest in question you can choose to be a wizard, a cleric, rogue, fighter or simpleton, each with his own characteristics and abilities. A split text/graphic game, it has a reasonably wide range of vocabulary. Generally a very good game and a traditional format adventure with plenty of scope. The only serious drawback is that you can't play another game. Once finished the program quits permanently.





SAS ASSAULT

Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £6.95
In this text and some graphics adventure you are leading an SAS team who must recover the Russian Ambasador from kidnappers before the Russians take the matter as an act of war. The Russian is being held in a farmhouse and part one is the assault. Part two, on the reverse side of the tape, carries the action forward with your ratings dependent upon how well you did in part one. It all moves along at a fair pace, with text descriptions and prompts as to the weapons you carry and how many bursts you can fire. When a situation develops you are given lettered choices like 'Go back' or 'Fire' or 'Wait'. In between there are line drawings and some maps but most of the action is reported by the computer along the 'You hit one and killed him,' lines. Pretty fast responses, a lively story and generally not bad value. Overall CRASH rating 56% M/C.

SHIP OF DOOM

Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
Adventure 'C' takes you into space and on a reconnaissance trip your ship is drawn by a Graviton beam onto an alien cruiser. Fred, your pet android, informs you that the cruiser is in search of humanoid planets to capture slaves whose brains will be replaced by microchips. The quest is to find the computer room and press the button to switch it off. You want to be wary in an Artic adventure, however, of switching off too many computers should you come across them. In 'Planet of Death' there is a computer which you may be tempted to disconnect. Doing so will dump you into a Sinclair Research logo!



TEN LITTLE INDIANS

Producer: Digital Fantasia, 48K £9.95
Author: Brian Howarth

The object of the game is to collect all ten little indians, which are figurines amounting to a fantastic fortune. It starts unconventionally enough inside a train carriage with no apparent way out, especially as you can see the countryside whizzing past the windows. After a certain number of goes the train crashes! Getting the train to stop takes some experimenting, but when it does, it pulls up at the station of Lower Massington, which turns out to be another problem, in as much as the game really gets going in Upper Massington, in the manor house which belonged to the late Major Johnston-Smythe! Here the fabulous gold figurine is hidden, but so are ten identical ones made from worthless metals which will guide you to the fortune itself. Be warned, many other fortune hunters have had a go and never been heard from again. Usual on/off text/graphics facility of Digital Fantasia games, and a convoluted plot worthy of Agatha Christie in this highly recommended adventure.

TIME MACHINE

Producer: Digital Fantasia, 48K £9.95
Author: Brian Howarth

In an adventure that could have been written by H.G. Wells, you take the part of a local news reporter for the Tulkingham & Dunsby Gazette – hardly a thrilling job until strange goings-on are reported around the old house on the moors which belongs to an eccentric scientist by the name of Potter. The game starts in a dense foggy moor as you search for the old house itself. It is easy to die in a bog before finally finding the house where the real adventure gets under way. You may eventually get to several destinations in time and space to locate prisms and rescue the time machine's owner. Objects collected in one dimension may well be needed in another, so it all takes a lot of working out. Bad language results in the admonishment to wash your mouth out! Excellent, atmospheric descriptions and a graphics on/off facility. Overall CRASH rating 65%

URBAN UPSTART

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50 (3)

Scarthorpe is the sort of town where even the dogs carry flick-knives, where there's only one road in, and it's a one way street. . .This text and graphics adventure is set in today's urban sprawl with unemployment opportunities, uncaring septic hospitals and sceptic police stations where arrest for obscenity is common. Football hooligans haunt the dirty streets and rats aren't all you'll find in Cut Throat Alley. The responses are reasonable, not super fast, and the graphics which add little to the content of the adventure but a lot to the pervading atmosphere, are rather slow to build up. General rating, above average, overall CRASH rating 64%.

VAMPIRE VILLAGE

Producer: Terminal, 48K £6.95 (1)

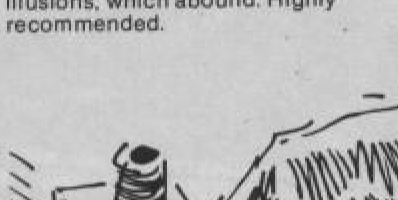
This graphics adventure is so graphics-oriented there is hardly any text to contend with. The village of Vlasdorf lives under the shadow of the vampire's castle, and as Mayor of the village you must find volunteers, provide them with money to buy equipment and food, and get them to help you destroy the vampire menace. Usual vampire rules apply—stakes through the heart, no flying by day, garlic keeps him at bay. The screen displays a map of Vlasdorf and the surrounding countryside with hosts of black shapes for buildings. You control your volunteer by the cursor keys—he's a small black dot—and you can send him to shops to buy things (like garlic), the boat house for a boat to cross the river (they drown if they fall in), the church for holy water, and so on. The village operates in real time moving from day to night with the usual rapidity of all good horror films! An unusual game with many other features and reasonable value for money. Overall CRASH rating 64%. M/C.

VELNOR'S LAIR

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Author: Derek Brewster

No adventure anthology would be complete without this one. Text only, but fluid, copious text with fast response times and a sense of numour that takes some of the sting from the gruesome tale of terror which lurks within the complex of Velnor's Lair. There's a clever use of repeat locations which makes you think you aren't getting anywhere, when in fact you must keep entering the same command for five or six steps. The denizens of this adventure are a monstrous lot, and the goblins are tricky indeed. Chose your character carefully, wizard, warrior or priest, and watch out for illusions, which abound. Highly recommended.

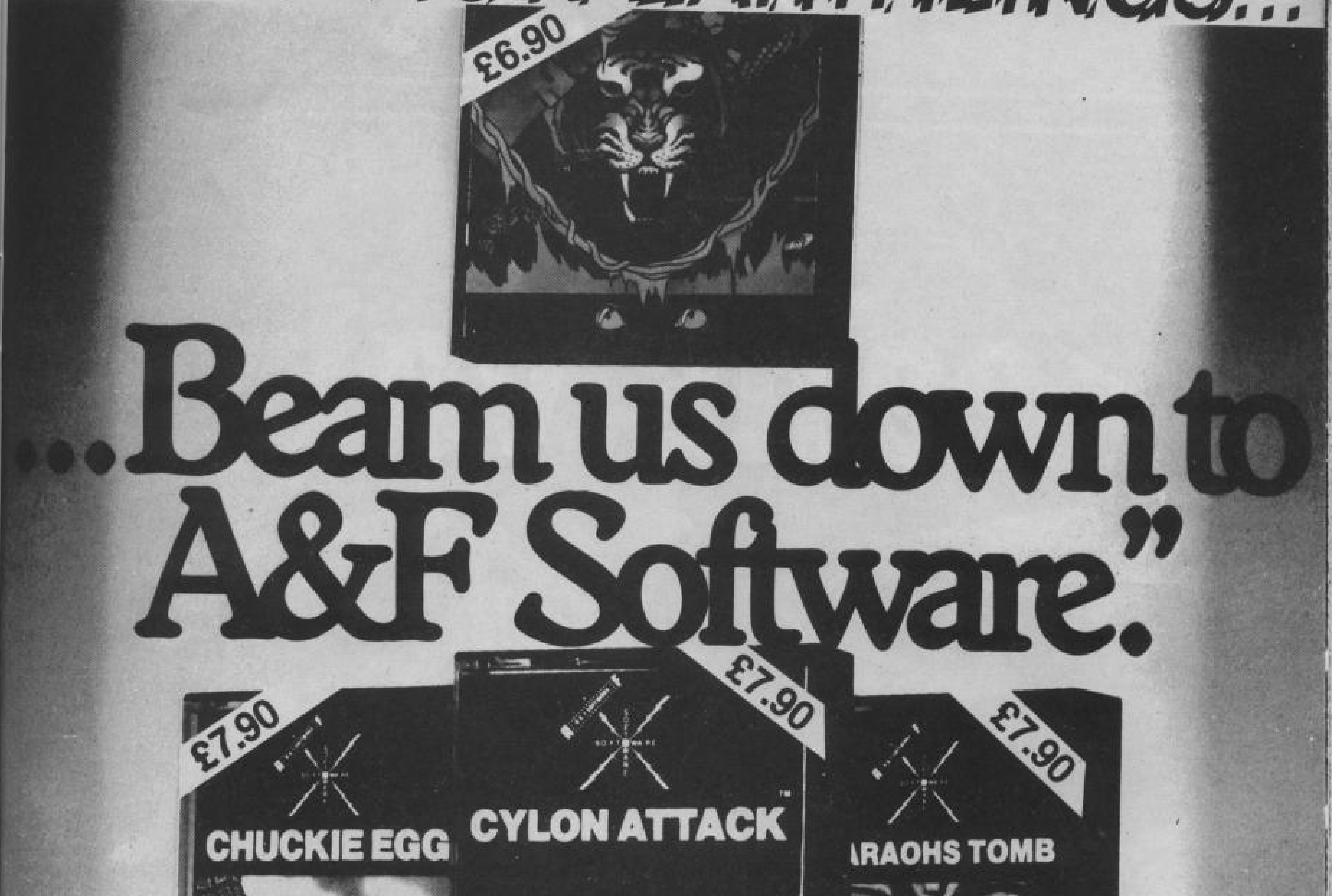




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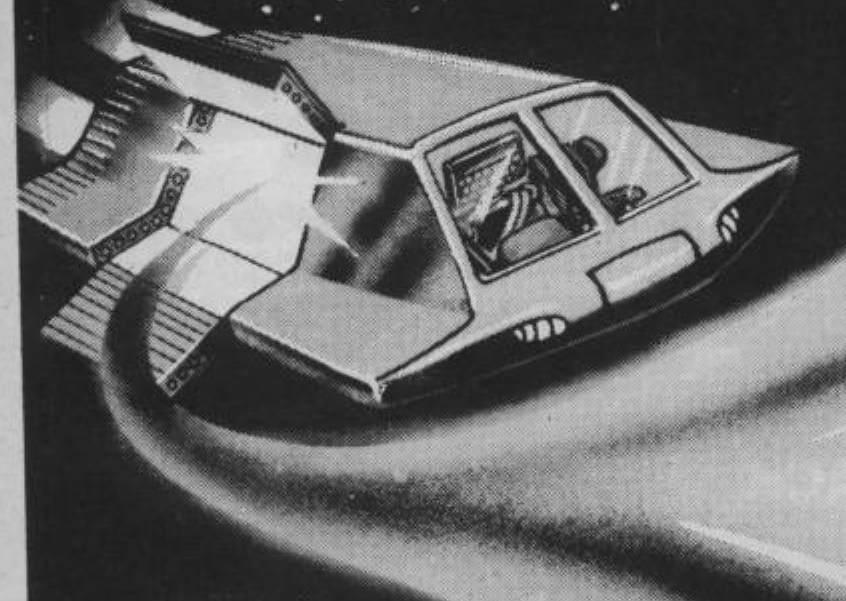
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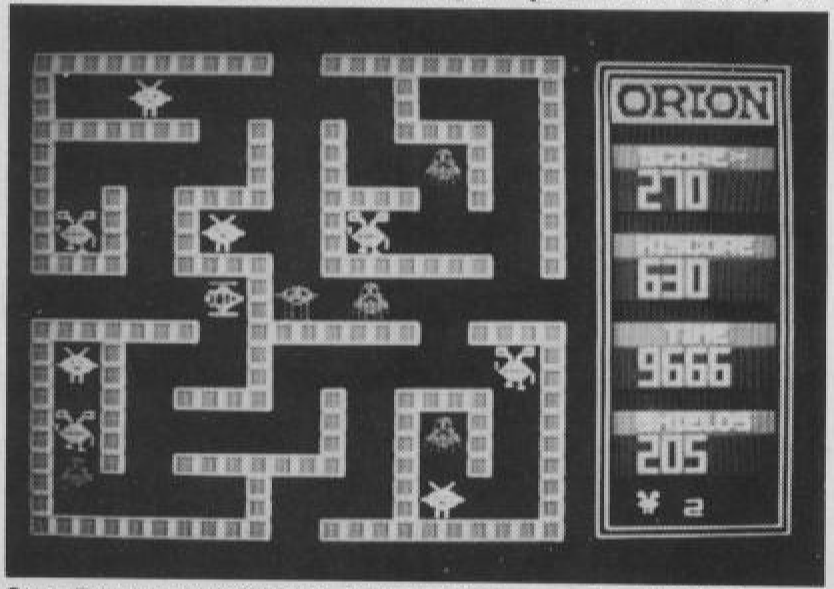
Producer: **Software Projects**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Ian Beynon**

After an attack by the Dark Horde, 100 of your Beta Class androids were kidnapped. Your mission is to rescue the androids from the underground maze beneath the palace of Nedab, the leader of the Horde. Twenty-five caverns are laid out on a 5 x 5 grid. Starting from the central cavern, you must journey through all of them collecting your androids. There are four imprisoned androids per cavern.

Green Zygon guards are on patrol in the mazes. Although these only wander around aimlessly, they kill on contact. Your Orion buggy is equipped with WX110 force screens (the ones with the whiter-than-white green specs) which, when activated, enable you to destroy Zygons. There are also white coloured Renlim (for faster acting relief) and these can be run over for extra points, but your scanners will become deactivated until you collect another android.

This puts it fairly simply, but should you run over a second Renlim before collecting an android, you will be destroyed, and your force field needs replenishing after use. This happens automatically but it does take time, so repeated contact with Zygons will result in death.

The screen is split into a large playing square to the left and a taller status panel on the right which shows score, hiscore, time and shield power. Each of the mazes is relatively simple in layout and there are four Zygons and four Renlims to cope with. When you run over a Renlim, only the small squares at each intersection remain (your scanners are deactivated), so it becomes hard to make your way round the maze to collect the next android. When you leave a maze the screen flashes, closes down, then opens up to reveal the new maze into which you have moved, re-establishing the scanners if they were still out.



Green Zygons and white Renlim fall before the power of you WX110 force field – may you wash whiter than white.

CRITICISM

'Fortunately your force field is ever recharging, so it pays to keep an eye on the status board, because it is drained very quickly too. There are four movement speeds which can be altered actually during play to give you bursts of speed, but, of course, everything else speeds up too. A good addictive game with plenty going on. The aliens are very nicely drawn and colours have been used well. The sound has also been well used to give maximum enjoyment without the expense of a headache!'

'Maze games seem to remain popular with programmers, and it is becoming harder to find something new to do with them. Orion *actually resembles a 'Berserk' game in some respects, but the graphics lift it far above those humble beginnings. This is a very simple idea –* go in and rescue your androids, but it manages to be playable and quite addictive. The graphics are detailed and reasonably smooth and I enjoyed playing it.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, B=force field
Joystick: Kempston, Hardware Projects Soundstik
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: smooth, fast and detailed
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1 but 4 speeds
Lives: 3
Screens: 25
General rating: very good, addictive.

Use of computer	68%
Graphics	78%
Playability	81%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	82%
Value for money	76%
Overall	76%

Space Station Zebra

Producer: **Beyond Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **BASIC and machine code**
Author: **Pat Norris**

Space Station Zebra, apart from being a good name for a science fiction movie, is, as is name suggests, a space station. It is situated at the farthest outpost of the galaxy, spinning quite happily until the aliens come. Now the energy reserves are low, only one lazgun remains operative, and you are the sole remaining survivor.

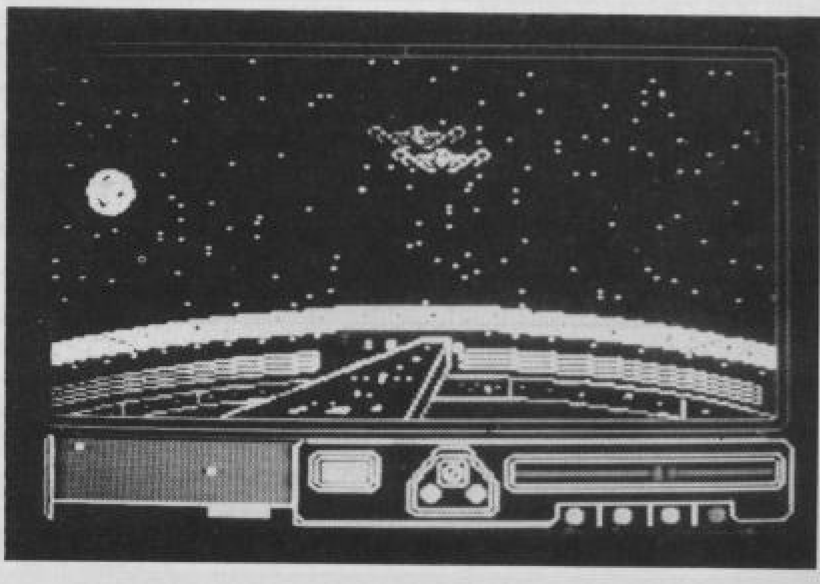
The screen display is seen as if from a control tower of the ring-shaped space station, with the outer rim just visible at the bottom. Beyond that are the outer reaches of space, filled with stars. Below the viewscreen there is a radar, a thrust indicator, and an energy level indicator. The radar screen shows the view around the station unfolded and aliens will appear on the screen. The lazgun only works when there is sufficient energy. The sights are two fine markers top and bottom and left and right of the view screen. When the game starts the station is rotating and the aliens will try to attack the blind side. The spin must be halted before the lazgun can be used, so the radar is employed to bring an alien round to the front.

The alien craft appear, with a partial 3D effect, to attack the station. Your station's shields will only survive seven hits, but are replenished with every completed phase. There are three phases with meaner aliens each time.

CRITICISM

'The aliens come towards you in a poor 3D effect. Each move you make uses up energy, with recharges if no keys are pressed. When you press the thruster direction to start the station spinning again, the thrusters always come at full power. I didn't like the way this happens, totally unrealitic. The game has no real content and laser control is difficult without any cross hairs. No original

Good graphics put to poor use on the fringes of known space. *Space Station Zebra.*



ideas have gone into this game at all. Terrible.'

'The graphics are very good looking with smoothly scrolling star screen, so it seems a shame that the game itself doesn't really live up to them. A serious problem is the laser sight. The small markers at the extreme edges of the view screen are hard to see anyway, but when you are staring in the centre of the screen as an alien comes towards you, they cannot be seen at all, which seems entirely pointless and makes the game unplayable.'

'The game idea is quite simple – shoot aliens as they attack you in a very poor looking 3D with your laser which can't move fast enough to cope with them unless you are a clairvoyant and have it aimed right at the place where the alien appears. Good looking graphics, though poor 3D but a rather unplayable and uninteresting game.'

COMMENTS

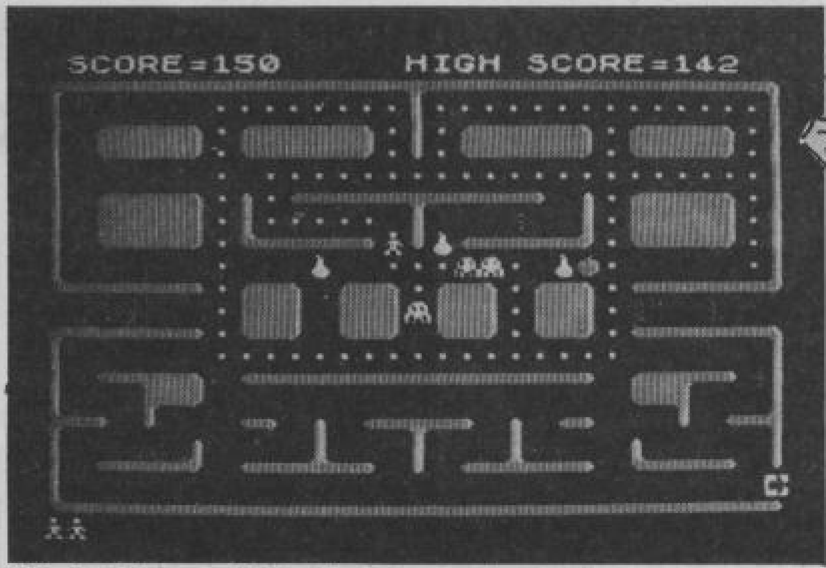
Controls keys: Ø and 1 stop/start rotation, M=fire, O/A up/down on sights
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: reasonable, but slow on the movement of sight
Use of colour: good
Graphics: smooth and effective, but poor 3D
Sound: fair
Skill levels: 3 progressive
Lives: 1, shields take 7 hits
General rating: waste of money.

Use of computer	40%
Graphics	60%
Playability	20%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	10%
Value for money	15%
Overall	**35%**

Potty Planter

Producer: **Mogul**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Author: **Michael Welbourne**

Potty Planter is a mirror image 'Pacman' game, which is to say, you must guide your man about a series of mazes, dropping dots on the way, while ghosts chase you. Instead of four power pills and several ghosts, there are many such brown 'pills' dotted about and only two ghosts. As soon as you eat a ghost, another appears. The pills are only effective for a few seconds or for one ghost, which ever is the sooner. Bonus fruit lie all over. There is a wrap around tunnel horizontally, and an exit gate at the bottom right-hand corner which must be reached when the last dot has been laid. Occasionally a bird tries to eat your dots.



Potty Planter **turns out to be a Namcap.**

CRITICISM

'Once the maze has been covered by dots you make your exit through a door and into a different maze. If the bird tries to eat your dots the only way to prevent it is to eat it. YUK! The maze is drawn very well but characters such as ghosts and yourself are not. Also the movements are written in BASIC, which makes everything a bit sluggish, and it can take as long as five minutes to complete a maze. I can't really recommend this game, though if you like arcade games and have slow reactions it might suit you.'

'The graphics are small and jerky. Some form of data corruption must have occurred on loading because the shapes of the moving characters did not seem right: a mess in fact. A fair to average arcade game.'

'It took an astonishingly long time to load – I began to think it was a Commodore tape! The resulting program hardly seemed worth all that writing to me. As a 'Pacman' it doesn't have the grace of the original; as an arcade game for the Spectrum today it doesn't have enough originality or quality in the graphics.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/Z up/down, I/P left/right, quite well placed
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: fairly responsive but not sufficiently so in a tight spot
Use of colour: good
Graphics: small, jerky but good maze
Sound: reasonable
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: fair.

Use of computer	53%
Graphics	42%
Playability	47%
Getting started	53%
Addictive qualities	38%
Value for money	40%
Overall	**46%**

Dragonsbane

Producer: **Quicksilva**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **BASIC with some m-c**
Author: **Preston, Hunt, Rose & Moore**

This graphical adventure-style game takes you deep into the maze of rooms that make up Earthstone Castle, where you must battle with vampires, zombies, skeletons, gryphons and sphinx, among other legendary beasts. All this to rescue the Princess Paula



from the Dragons Lord.

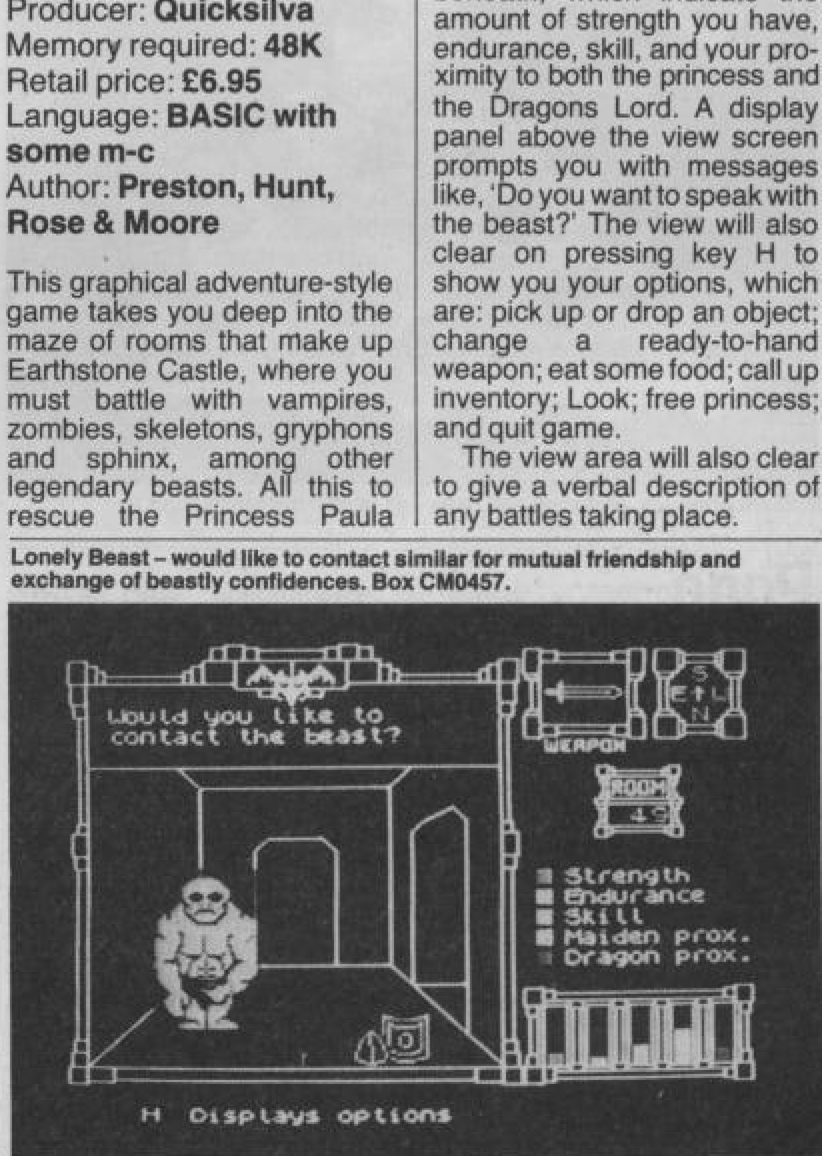
There are 172 rooms laid out in a roughly radial manner, so that progressing backwards or forwards a number won't actually mean ending up in the room next door.

There are 20 duplicated monsters to encounter, some friendly, most not, and you will need to eat food regularly to keep up strength, although over-eating will give you indigestion and halve your strength! Of course, there are also all sorts of useful objects lying about to be pcked up when they are needed – if you can work out when that is.

The screen is divided up into a main viewing area in which very simple 3D-style images appear of each room, plus a colour representation of any objects or monsters, and a status area, which gives an indication of the direction in which you are facing, the weapon you are using, the room number you are in and a key to the coloured bar codes beneath, which indicate the amount of strength you have, endurance, skill, and your proximity to both the princess and the Dragons Lord. A display panel above the view screen prompts you with messages like, 'Do you want to speak with the beast?' The view will also clear on pressing key H to show you your options, which are: pick up or drop an object; change a ready-to-hand weapon; eat some food; call up inventory; Look; free princess; and quit game.

The view area will also clear to give a verbal description of any battles taking place.

Lonely Beast – would like to contact similar for mutual friendship and exchange of beastly confidences. Box CM0457.



CRITICISM

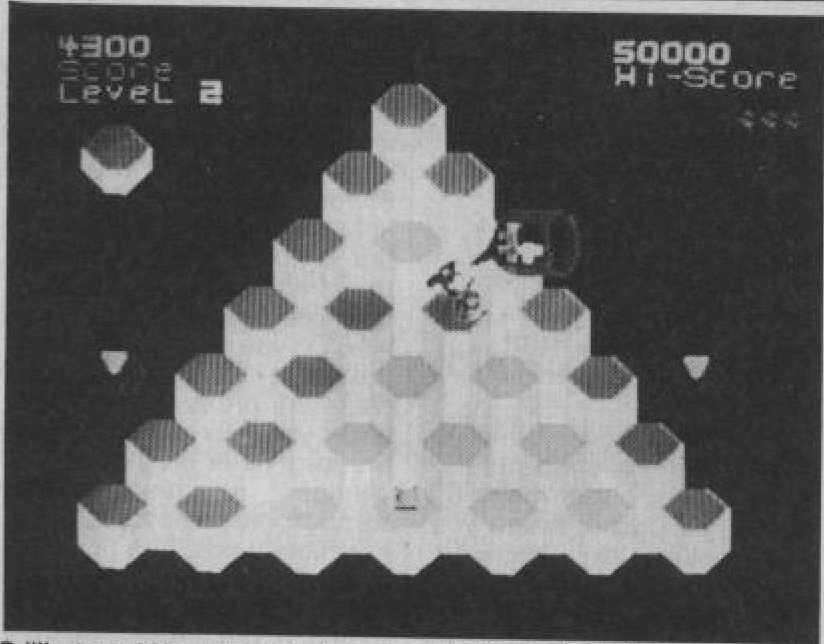
'Movement from room to room is done by pressing the cursor keys, which is quite a good idea, although if you press too long you may move through several rooms at once without realising. The computer doesn't say much throughout the game, making the adventure quite boring after a short while.'

'This isn't a proper adventure because the player has little control over the game and there really aren't any puzzles to solve other than the geographical one – where are you? Most moves are made as a result of an option menu. The hi-res graphics make a fine tracery of white detail to tie everything together in a vaguely Gothic-looking way, but it doesn't make up for the atmosphere lost by not having proper text descriptions, and the 3D effect of the rooms is extremely simplistic. Not my favourite type of game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors, plus prompt keys
Keyboard play: reasonably responsive
Use of colour: reasonable
Graphics: detailed creatures although slowish to appear
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1
Screens: 172 rooms
General rating: neither adventure nor arcade, this game falls between two stools and fails to captivate.

Use of computer	55%
Graphics	64%
Playability	54%
Getting started	59%
Addictive qualities	42%
Value for money	52%
Overall	**54%**



Brilliant graphics, swearing and balls – all part of the fun in ***Pogo.***

Pogo

Producer: **Ocean**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.90**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Ronald Rhodes**

With a hop, skip and a jump, *Pogo* is what you might call a second generation 'Painter'-type game. Actually it's based on the arcade original 'Q-Bert,' and **Ocean's** version looks excellent. Last month we reviewed *Pi-Balled* from **Automata**, and *Pogo* is very similar.

Resembling one of the crystal constructs from the opening sequences of Superman I, the Planet of Steps is the playground on which Pogo must survive. In effect it is a pyramid with 28 steps: hexagonal-shaped steps in 3D. The top surfaces of these steps have to be re-coloured to match the colour shown in a step at the top left of the screen. To do this Pogo must hop from step to step. When he lands on one it changes colour. He loses a life should he hop off the edges of the pyramid.

Unfortunately he has been pursued from his home planet by some enemies. These consist of glass balls, a snake called Hiss and a few scorpions. The glass balls drop on to the steps from the top and roll down, crushing anything in their path. The scorpions fly on from the sides and try to sting Pogo, whereas Hiss actually chases Pogo about. The best way to avoid the snake is to jump on to one of the flying saucers that linger beside the steps. Not only will this transport Pogo to the top of the pyramid again, it will lure the snake off the edge to is death – for a while! It comes back soon enough.

Depending on the screen level, Pogo will have to change the colour of the steps once or twice. there are also a varying number of saucers, which may only be used once per screen. For the first four screens there is only one colour to change, and from screen 5 onwards, two. Bonus points are awarded for flying saucers not used. The inlay states that the pyramid contains 27 steps, which must be a misprint as there are actually 28.

CRITICISM

'A well-presented game with a very colourful loading screen and clear instructions. *Pogo* has the best 3D effect that I have seen on the Spectrum for this type of game. The graphics are excellent and very much like the arcade version – they are fast, smooth, well detailed and responsive, with superb use of colour. The sound, too, is exceptional. It's a well thought out game which is very addictive and which I can certainly recommend.'

'The characterful drawing of Pogo himself is quite enjoyable, and the detail of the others is well done. Pogo as a game is strongly coloured and the graphics are fast and smooth. It's a simple game idea, and one that works well, is playable and addictive. My one complaint is that the keys are a bit of a stretch. The four directions are actually diagonals and Ocean have placed them at the extremities of the keyboard. I would have thought the end keys on the two bottom rows would have been a much better solution.'

'*Pogo* is an extremely playable version of the arcade original with high-quality sound and graphics. It's better than *Pi-Balled* on control with its excellent responses, but I think *Pi-Balled* has better looking flying saucers. Good control helps to make Pogo very playable and addictive and, all round, this is the best version I have seen.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1=up/left, zero=up/right, CAPS SHIFT=down/left and BREAK=down/right
Joystick: good range with Protek, Kempston, ZX 2 on a select menu to which you return after each game
Keyboard play: highly responsive, although keys may be awkward for some
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: very good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 4
Screens: 16
General rating: addictive, fun and very good value for money.

Use of computer	84%
Graphics	84%
Playability	89%
Getting started	83%
Addictive qualities	92%
Value for money	92%
Overall	**87%**

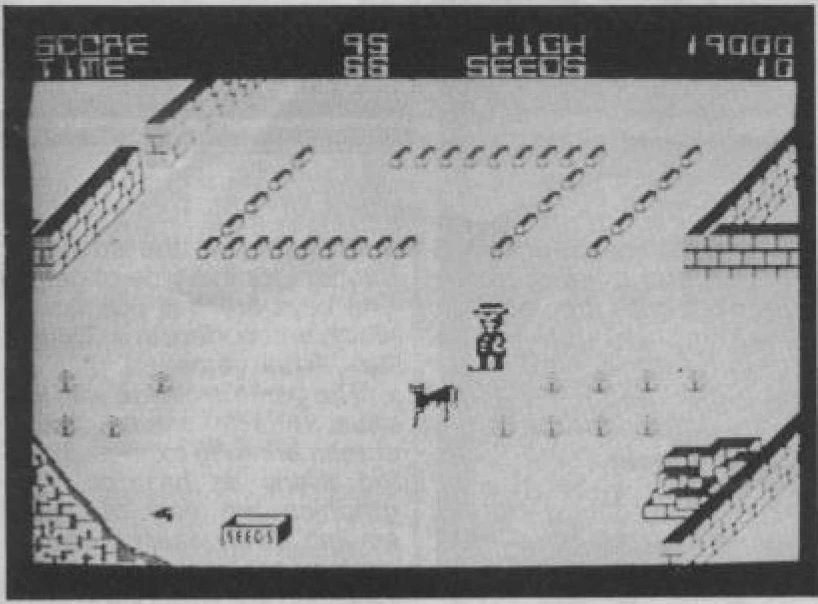


Pedro

Producer: **Imagine**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£3.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Frank Johnson**

In line with **Imagine's** new policy of detailed inlay cards, comes a new super-low price. The inlay gives detailed instructions on how to play the game, as well as details on the author and his host of helpers which include some other professional musicians Imagine have hired to improve the sound on their games.

Pedro is a sad little Mexican. At least, if he's not sad, he should be. Trying to scratch a bare existence from the dry soil



That well-known Mexican jumping bean, *Pedro*, has green fingers and bloody red feet and faces extinction of his garden.

is hard enough without having to cope with hordes of predators. He has a box of seeds, with which he can replace those plants eaten by the nasties, but a local tramp is likely to stroll in and take them if Pedro doesn't stop him in time and frighten him off. Actually the inlay states that Pedro has the most beautiful flower garden South of the Border, and that's what attracts all the animals to come and eat the plants. These include ants, rabbits and cats, among others. To stop them Pedro may jump up and down on them, or he may take bricks from the pile, or compost, and block up the entrances to the garden. The game is over when all the plants have been eaten.

The action is played out on a screen which suggests a 3D perspective, and this is accentuated by the fact that up and down are in reality diagonals.

CRITICISM

'The game has many key combinations but they are poorly laid out in respect of the speed with which you have to use the pick/drop/stomp key. The graphics are detailed and reasonably smooth but oddly for Imagine, the colour looks primitive. The sound – well the tunes – are fabulous. The game is an original idea but I thought badly executed.

Movement can be very tricky and unreliable, and attempting to make the game 3D is really a problem which makes movement and the game actually more difficult to play. Not my favourite Imagine game at all.'

'Pedro *is a rather odd game from Imagine. The screen is in semi-3D perspective view, which makes Pedro move about rather oddly. The destroying of animals by stomping on them is hard due to the controls being difficult to manage. The graphics are good but not exceptional, and there are a few attribute problems with colour. This is not one of Imagine's best games, although what is poor from Imagine still rates average due to their usual high standards, which I hope aren't slipping. However, the more I played the game the better it seemed, and it did grow on me in a way.'*

'The game has been designed to be quite hard to play, with so many animals eating the plants. Pedro can only carry one thing at a time so he must decide whether it's to be seeds to plant, bricks or compost to try and block off the garden entrances. But some animals seem to eat bricks as well. It would have been more manageable if the keys had been kinder. Placing seeds (you only have a limited number which is shown at the top of the screen) tended to be difficult because of the perspective angle chosen. Great tunes, but only average attempt overall, with rather distressing use of colour.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: left/right alternate keys bottom row, down – any key on 2nd row, up – any key on third row. Jump, pick, put – any key on top row or SPACE
Joystick: Fuller, 2 x 2, Kempston, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: very responsive, but finicky in movement
Use of colour: average, although plenty used
Graphics: detailed, reasonably smooth
Sound; game sound, poor, tunes very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1
General rating: fair to average

Use of computer	70%
Graphis	68%
Playability	47%
Getting started	61%
Addictive qualities	55%
Value for money	68%
Overall	**62%**

Adder Attack

Producer: **Mogul**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **M. Smith**

This game is a 'remake' of **Postern's** *Snake Pit*, which was also for the Spectrum. The object is to go about the screen collecting gold nuggets. In the various corners are snakes, coiling round and round, trapped by the nuggets. Only one, a blue snake, is intelligent enough to go collecting nuggets as well, and as it does so it inevitably releases the other snakes. They do not collect nuggets, but they will collect you if you meet one head on.

So the strategy is to collect as many nuggets as possible without releasing any snakes yourself, and do it before the blue snake releases them all. Clear a screen and you go on to another one with more snakes, starting with five and going up to eight.

CRITICISM

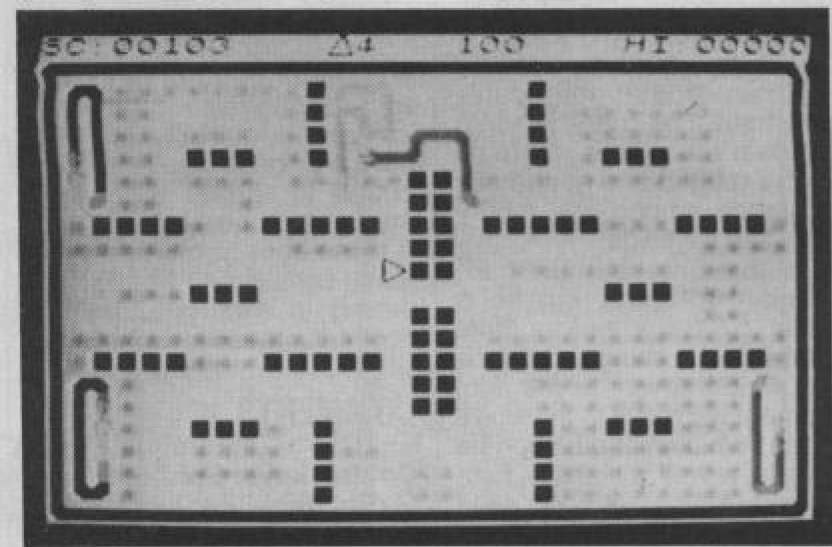
'The game is a very panicky one to play, especially as the snakes are very intelligent – perhaps too intelligent. They are also fast moving. Quite an addictive game where lively reactions are needed.'

'Snakes squirming over the screen is not a pretty sight, and these are very fast moving ones. I think Postern's Snake Pit *looks the better game and has the better graphics, but this version is still very playable. The user-defined keys are good, and the responses reasonable, although I think the snakes have been given the edge oyer "you" if it coms to an argument.'*

'The graphics are fairly fast and smooth, although the colours could have been better used: yellow eggs on a white background are hard to see well. Reasonably addictive, because simple, but perhaps not very long lasting.'

COMMENTS

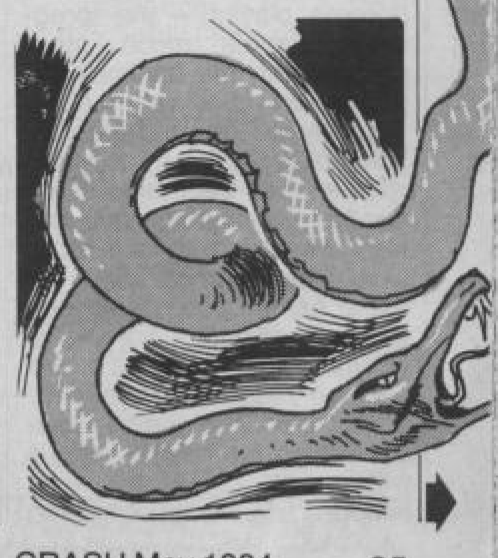
Control keys: user-definable, four directions required
Joystick: almot any via UDK
Keyboard play: reasonably responsive



Squirm and wriggle – your harmless little triangle faces snake phobia in *Adder Attack.*

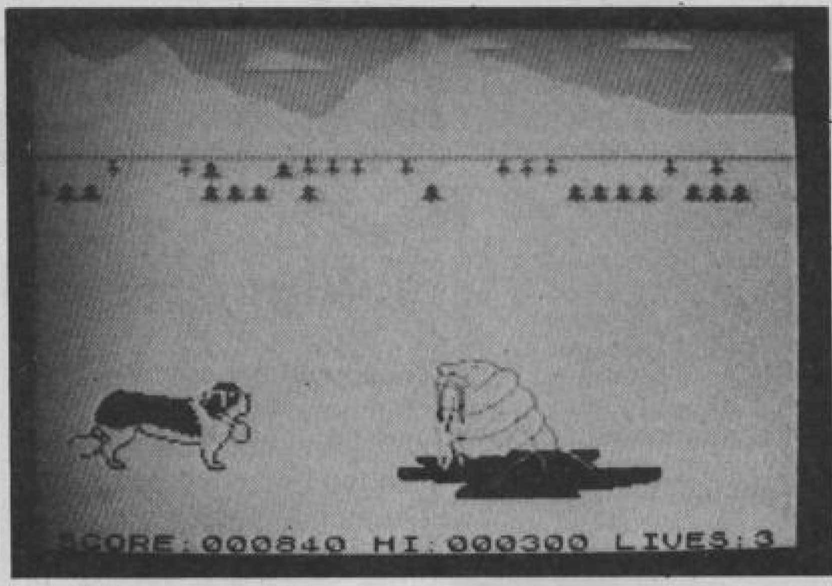
Use of colour: average, could be better used
Graphics: fast and fairly smooth, but very simple
Sound: fair
Skill levels: 4
Lives: 1
General rating: an average game from an older idea, medium addictive.

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	58%
Playability	68%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**64%**



Adventures of St. Bernard

Producer: **Carnell Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Stephen Kirk**



Atta boy! Grab a wolf, leap a walrus and keep the brandy coming.

Here's the chance you've all been waiting for – become a St. Bernard dog called Brandy and rescue your mistress from the clutches of the abominable snowman. The scene is some northern wastelands where he lives a rugged and dangerous existence among the mountains and ice fields.

In stage one, you must make Brandy run along, but he is beset by black wolves from both sides. Turning him to face the attacking wolf at the right moment will result in the wolf's death. Whichever direction he runs in, a wolf will attack from behind. After seventeen dead wolves Brandy moves to the next screen where he has to jump over holes in the ice through which walruses are rearing up. Stage three sees Brandy climbing up to the snowman's lair, leaping over falling snowballs and fighting off the wolves again. Stage four, and we are nearing the lair. The snowman jumps up and down, causing Brandy to slip down the mountain. In stage five there are more pools of water, a walrus and skating penguins.

CRITICISM

'I was quite surprised when a 3D view appeared in a way that I only noticed after about 5-10 minutes playing – the foreground moves much more quickly than the background. Brandy runs fairly well for a dog with only two legs and a tablecloth looking tail! A transparent walrus takes the theme of ice and cold a little too far, and they are also very difficult to jump. After a short while the entire game becomes repetetive and boring.'

'The graphics are nice and big and reasonably well animated, but I had terrible trouble getting the dog to jump a walrus. It takes off with encouraging energy, and then seems to hover in mid-air, waiting for the beast to come up underneath it. The skating penguins are very good. This isn't a fast game, and the main irritation is in the very slow response to the keys, intended presumably, but not very good as it just frustrates in the end.'

'This is quite an original idea with quite good graphics but all in all, not quite good enough to appeal for very long. It takes ages to get through a stage considering what's happening in each one, and so soon becomes uninteresting.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 5 or Z left, 8 or M right, SPACE to jump.
Joystick: Protek, AGF
Keyboard play: frustratingly inhibited
Use of colour: for an icy game very good
Graphics: simple animation against scrolling background
Sound: fair
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 5
General rating: a good idea that doesn't seem to have been pushed far enough and represents only fair value for money.

Use of computer	68%
Graphics	71%
Playability	51%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	44%
Value for money	46%
Overall	**58%**

Defenda

Producer: **Interstella**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **A.J. Lloyd**

Having said in last month's issue, that after *Starblitz*, there wouldn't be much point anyone else doing a 'Defender' game, it's always worth being able to say that you've changed your mind if someone proves you wrong, and **Interstella** have come up with a 'Defender' well worth changing minds for.

It is a classic version with green landers, purple mutants, mine layers, pods, swarmers and humanoids. Your ship is equipped with a powerful laser and three smart bombs. Destroying a lander who has grabbed a human will earn you points, but you'll get more for catching the human before it falls back to earth. Humans falling from a great height blow up when they hit the ground, but they tend to be safe if it's only a small fall.

There is the obligatory radar at the top of the screen and the ship has the customary facilities of reverse and hyperspace.

CRITICISM

'An excellent copy of the arcade original with detailed and fast aliens. The ship behaves very realistically, especially when slowing or reversing direction, when it slews backwards for several inches before gathering speed in the other direction. Colour is well used and the sound is average for this type of game. The keys are well positioned, which is important in a "Defender." A brill game.'

'The game is played with the usual attack waves, each screen bringing more and varied aliens as hazards. The graphics are very fast and smooth, lovely laser blasts and explosions, especially when "you" go for a burton. I was disappointed with the sound, which is non-existent during play, the only explosion sound being when your ship is destroyed.'

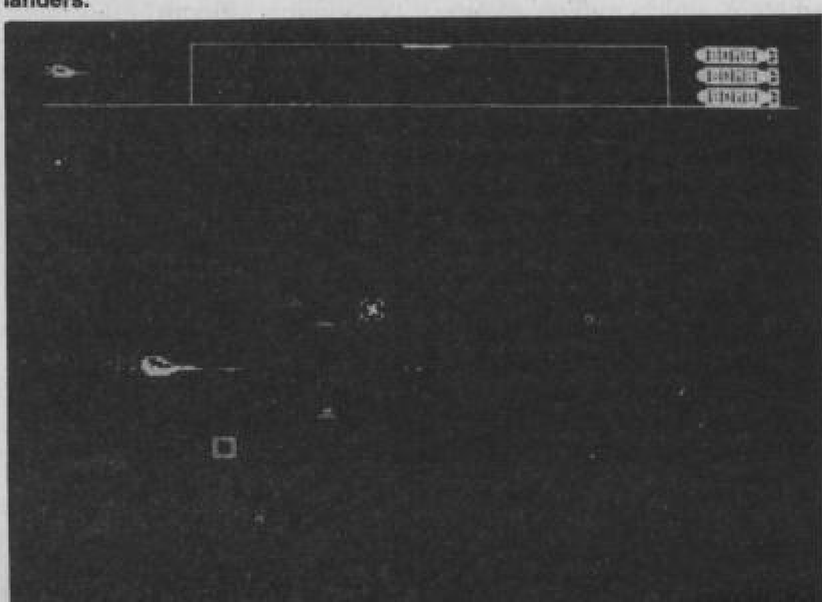
'Lack of sound makes this version a fraction less exciting to play than the **Softek** one, but I thought the graphics were actually slightly better, and that makes up for it. The keys are well thought out and the radar is quite accurate. If you like the thrills of a classic arcade game, then this is a very good buy.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: T to Q=up, V to Z=down, G to A=reverse, P=fire, O=thrust, H to ENTER and B to SPACE=smart bombs
Joystick: Kempston, ZX 2
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: smooth, detailed, fast
Sound: fair
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
General rating: very good

Use of computer	79%
Graphics	93%
Playability	93%
Getting started	91%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**89%**

Smooth graphics for *Defenda* help defeat the pods, swarmers, mutants and landers.



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ADVENTURE REVIEWS

"Adventures which have a fast response time, are spectacular in the amount of detail and number of locations, and are available to cassette owners . . Simply smashing!"
– Soft, Sept 83

"**Colossal Adventure** is included in Practical Computing's top ten games choice for 1983: "Poetic, moving and tough as hell."
– PC, Dec 83

"**Colossal Adventure** . . For once here's a program that lives up to its name . . a masterful feat. Thoroughly recommended"
– Computer Choice, Dec 83

"**Colossal Adventure** is one of the best in its class. I would recommend it to any adventurer."
– Acorn User, Feb 84

"**Adventure Quest** . . This has always been one of the best adventures for me as it seems to contain the lot. In all it took me about eight months to solve."
– PCW, 18th Jan 84

"To sum up, **Adventure Quest** is a wonderful program, fast, exciting and challenging. If you like adventures then this one is for you"
– NILUG issue 1.3

"Colossal Adventure is simply superb . . For those who want to move onto another adventure of similar high quality, **Dungeon Adventure** is recommended. With more than 200 locations, 700 messages and 100 objects it will tease and delight!"
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WIZARDS OF COMPUTER GAMES SOFTWARE

Millionaire

Producer: **Incentive Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Author: **John Hunt**



The title page of this new strategy game shows a millionaire's mansion next to a drab looking block of flats – rags to riches. When the loading is completed the screen clears and you hear a telephone ringing – could it be fame on the other end?

As a home computer owner, you have written a program and are willing to invest £500 of your own money into marketing it. Can you make it to the top?

First up comes the inevitable strategy option meny – in this case a choice of what the program is to be: arcade, adventure, board game, business/serious program, educational, management game, utility program, wargame or Other. Having made this decision you are told that every good program will consist of a) good writing b) good presentation, c) original ideas or d) should maintain interest. You have 20 points and you must allocate the points according to your thoughts on these four headings. When this is done you may choose to market the game yourself, or sell it to a software house to raise more capital. Should you sell there are a few offers (the biggest of a meagre bunch of bids coming from Icentive of course). If none are acceptable you can carry on yourself.

The game presents most of the likely problems confronting a small software business and takes in such items as the cost of advertising and duplication. Decisions must be made regarding articles and PR in magazines, raising loan capital at the bank, writing new programs and whether to increase sales by adding short second programs to the other side of your tapes.

Each month a chart shows your progress, how many tapes have been sold in the month, how many games on the market, total sales, tapes still in stock, and on the debit side – rates, phones etc, total assets and amount borrowed from the bank. Interspersed news items inform you of things such as weather condition affecting sales of games, or whether a magazine has published an article about your products. If the worst should come to the worst, you can always sell out. . .

CRITICISM

'*Millionaire* has some very neat graphics for a strategy game. Colour is well used for the text to distinguish items at a glance, and the monthly bar chart showing your progress is quite an exciting matter. Every now and then, if you're doing well, you are offered "a chance to reconsider", which takes you back to the first option menu where you can decide on the value of content, presentation etc. I thought this was an enjoyable romp with several grains of truth buried in it!'

'*For anyone comtemplating marketing their own software,* Millionaire *may turn out to be less of a game and more a way of life. Given the normal limitations of a computer program, this one seems to echo problems encountered rather well – at least, if you've never encountered them before, it might seem to! It does tend to get a bit repetetive after a while, but I thought that was offset by the interest created in seeing your company rise and rise.*'

'Chance elements can sometimes seem needlessly cruel in strategy games. *Millionaire* has a recurrent busybody who causes you a loss of sales by raking up your past, which has obviously not been all that savoury. But on the whole life treats you kindly in this game compared with some. The graphics are very good, especially the pictures of your company's headquarters, which starts off in a terraced house, and moves onto a more salubrious suburb (I haven't made more money than that yet). I noticed that the scale on the bar chart alters to take into account the sums being discussed. *Millionaire* may not have quite the depth of options open to a player that some other strategy games have, but I found it all quite compulsive.

COMMENTS

Use of computer: mostly numeric keys, all screen prompted
Keyboard play: very fast responses
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: effective text, detailed scenes
Sound: average
Skill levels: 1
General rating: a relaxing game, and a compelling strategy.

Use of computer	78%
Graphics	76%
Playability	85%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	79%
Value for money	84%
Overall	**80%**

Brad Blasts the Galactic Barbarians

Producer: **Express Software**
Memory require: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **M. Fox**

Express Software is a new company who, in common with some other software houses, have chosen to create a hero around which to set games, in this case Brad. The scenario is set in the year 2025 and Earth is the HQ for the Intergalactic Security Network (ISN). The inhabitants of planet Delta 10 have become increasingly warlike and the ISN have been informed that the Galactic Barbarians who inhabit Delta 10 have developed a super power serum. Brad Stevens has been ordered to destroy the serum.

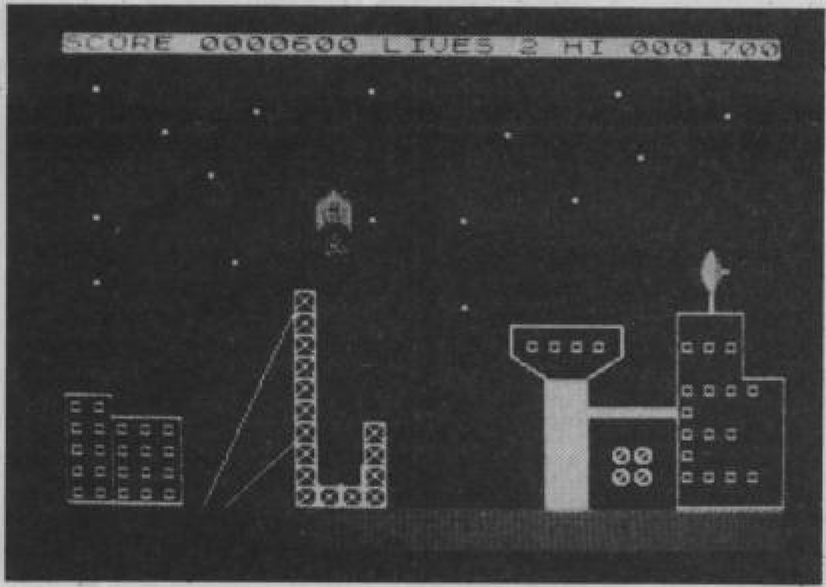
Brad Blasts the Galactic Barbarians is a game played in five stages. Stage 1 (flight through space) has Brad fighting his way to reach a space station while under attack from enemy fighters, comets and asteroids. Stage 2 (docking) sees Brad trying to get into the space station, which has been surrounded by enemy fighters. Stage 3 (flight to Delta 10) has Brad, now in a new fighter craft, battling through hordes of enemy craft. In Stage 3 (walk to the laboratory) Brad has to defend himself against a scouting party who are all equipped with jet packs. The final stage (inside the laboratory) is a large maze filled with cyborgs, and the walls of the passages are electrified.

The producers are running a competition, details on the inlay card. If you score over 10,000 points and complete the game you will receive a code. You also have to guess the year Brad arrives (he goes back in time) and fill in one of those lines which asks why you picked this year, to qualify. A portable TV is offered.

In addition to the five sheets of the game, there is a very attractive sequence in which Brad's ship takes off from Earth to do battle on the first main screen. Between each stage a transmission at the base of the playing area informs you of what's about to come.

CRITICISM

'Brad offers a very lively compendium of games without the usual drawbacks associated with having several different game types on one tape. After a mission control run-down on what you are supposed to attempt, and helpfully telling you it is a million to one you will succeed, your ship takes off. The first screen in this shoot 'em up game is a galaxian-style one with enemy ships diving down, firing, asteroid fragments falling and larger – blue ones – that tempt you to shoot – a mistake, as they shatter into more asteroid fragments. In addition, there are flaming comets streaking in from the left at a diagonal. If you clear it, you move on to a screen, where your ship automatically moves slowly up the screen towards the space station's open doors at the top. The Barbarian ships dodge all over the place trying to get you. The third is a fast galaxian-style again, but your new ship moves and fires much faster at the green hordes above. Once landed on Delta 10, Brad is seen on the ground firing up at



what looks like *Jetpac* men, who are dropping bombs on him. This screen leads to a complicated but simply drawn maze with electrified walls and cyborgs. There are three parts to the maze and different cyborgs in each. The games are all very jolly and well worth playing if you like shoot 'em ups.'

'Many different games requiring different skills have been combined into one, making a very playable package. Graphics are smooth, but not terribly fast, and your craft seems to be a little unresponsive. This does add to the difficulty of the game. The graphics have good detail and are colourful. The sound is quite good although basic in the sense that it only signals explosions and so on. I liked the third screen, especially the way your fighter fires its twin photon beams. After a few plays, the introductory message screens become irritating, and it might have been a good idea to have a skip facility. In general, an original plot.'

'This is definitely a game that needs a joystick, as the control keys are the cursors, which are rather awkward to use, especially in tight corners. On the other hand, the keys work better in the maze sections than the joystick, since fine tuning is needed to guide Brad through the narrow corridors. Good value with every screen being a playable game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors, Ø to fire
Joystick: Kempston, ZX 2, Protek, AGF
Keyboard play: a little unresponsive in ship movement
Use of colour: good
Graphics: generally good
Sound: above average
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
General rating: good, playable, its addictive qualities may wear after a bit

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	72%
Playability	78%
Getting started	83%
Addictive qualities	65%
Value for money	75%
Overall	**75%**

Sorcery

Producer: **Virgin Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Martin Wheeler**

Sorcery is an adventure arcade game along reasonablye similar lines to that of *Alchemist*. The earth has fallen into the Dark Ages and an evil Necromancer and his demonic servants have conquered the lands, enslaving the people. But there is stil a ray of hope – You. As the last of the great sorcerers, you must travel from your homeland to Stonehenge, where three fellow sorcerers are held captive.

Sorcery is played out over many screens with trees, lakes and castles. Each screen contains one or more demonic monsters as well as useful and harmful objects such as keys, swords and cauldrons that sap your energy. There are also cauldrons which replenish energy.

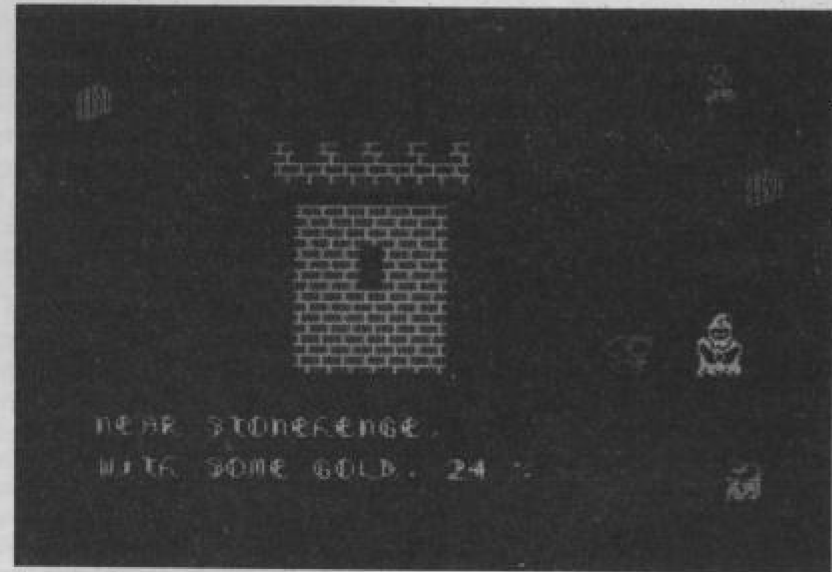
Half the trick, as with a text adventure, is to discover what objects, collected on one screen, with do on another. Keys will sometimes open trapdoors on another, without which you cannot leave the screen. All the while you are pursued by the monsters which flit about all over the screen. The Sorcerer can fly and try to avoid them, for any contact will freduce his energy. One problem is that the exit doors on each screen have different characteristics: some must be walked into, some flown into. Falling into a lake means instant death.

CRITICISM

'Like an adventure, in this game you must sort out what objects to take along with you. The problem is that collecting them means an almost certain encounter with the demonic monsters, whereas ignoring a key or a sword may mean you can get straight through the screen without a problem, only to encounter a door that won't open for you, or a monster that could have been killed with a sword. The screens are all played through very fast, no danger of getting bored with one. Some even take as little as 10 seconds. Good, large graphics and an imaginative use of landscape in some screens make this one of the best and most original yet of Virgin's games.

'*Sorcery is a fast-moving arcade adventure game with quite an original plot, and it is carried out well. There isn't much going on in each screen but it is still difficult. The graphics are colourful and well drawn, smooth moving and fast. Unfortunately the responsive keys are rather poorly positioned with left/right positioned one above the other. A good game, and certainly one of Virgin's best.'*

'Once you have sorted out what objects do what and on what screens, *Sorcery* loses some of its magic (groan). However, the arcade element still makes it enjoyable, and the amount of energy drain, when making contact with monsters, has been calculated very well, so that even a successful run through the screens will leave you on a knife edge in the last couple. Perhaps not very addictive after a few plays, but playable and nicely implemented with large, colourful graphics. The movement keys are a bit odd, but as there are only three, not too difficult.'



COMMENTS

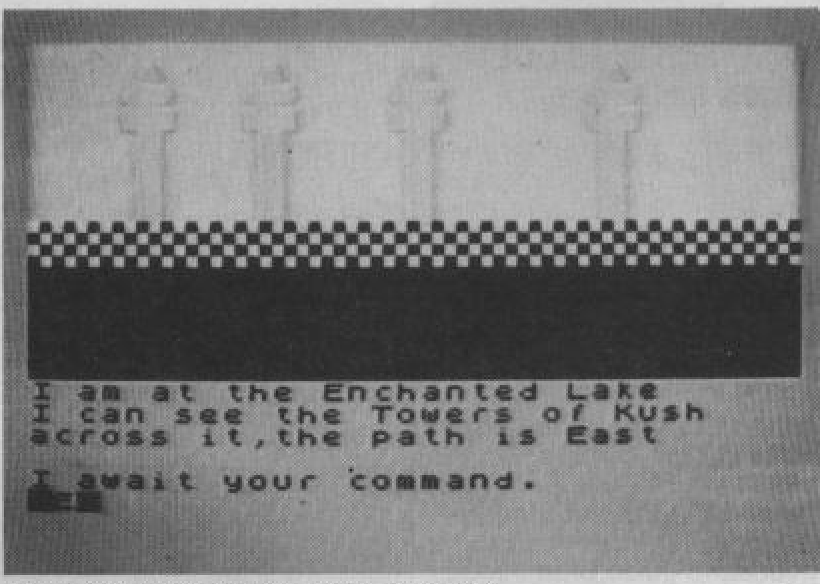
Control keys: Q/A left/right, Ø fly
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive, but poorly positioned
Use of colour: good
Graphics: smooth, fast, detailed, good
Sound: fair
Skill levels: 1
Lives: energy drain, only one if you land in the drink
General rating: good but lacking somewhere in the content to give it ever-lasting life.

Use of computer	63%
Graphics	79%
Playability	75%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	77%
Value for money	71%
Overall	**72%**



They Say the World will Die in Fire and Ice

Producer: **Electric Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£4.50**
Language: **machine code**



The World shall die by Fire and Ice – so save it.

Electric Software dub themselves 'The People's Company' and aim to produce games at prices people can afford. In fact this particular adventure was intended to be on sale at the amazing price of £2.99, but sadly the cost of packaging had been underestimated, which resulted in the rise. Nevertheless, at under £5 it does represent good value.

The scenario is that you are the Master of the Mystic Arts and the computer is your local disciple Zemlya. The Oracle Orb of Andorra has warned of twin demons of Fire and Ice released by the Nameless Ones to lay waste the Earth. As the Master, you aren't going anywhere of course, poor old loyal Zemlya has to do the dirty work while you watch on with your almost all-seeing eye.

This is the only instruction as to the object of the adventure, much has to worked out by the player. A brief instruction page on screen informs of the usual adventure words which may be used and warns you to experiment. It also suggests you SAVE the game every few steps as this only takes a few seconds and saves you the bother of starting off from the beginning every time you lose your life (or Zemlya's).



The game starts in the Master's chambers of meditation and there are no visible exits. Also present is the Oracle Orb of Andorra. The first problem to overcome is getting out of the chambers, and suffice to say that there are actually two directions and the method is very simple but not so obvious. Once you have solved this one, the answer to it will provide a guide to many other problems later on.

The game is largely text orientated, but there are also graphics of a simple nature to enliven the already busy proceedings.

CRITICISM

'Once you get out of the chambers of meditation the adventure really begins and takes you to various locations in the immediate vicinity of where you started. Stonehenge is just down the road, there's a mine, a dark and gloomy forest, a dark pit and the edge of the lake across which you can see the towers of Kush. It is into these towers you must go to get any further, but you can't swim and you never learned to fly. The computer's replies are humorous and often whining with self-pity, especially when you force it to enter dark mines and pits. Usually its sense of self-preservation should be taken to heart! So the responses are not only witty, but usually carry a hidden meaning as well. Never learned to fly, eh? Coming across a cloak of levitation might be useful, and, indeed, there is one – at least, there is if you can find out how to reach the location where it is hidden. Fire and Ice has you running around in circles to gather objects, drop them in favour of others, come back for them again until you gain entrance to the towers, where more serious info is imparted, and then the game takes on a new angle. You are presented with a complex spatial/mathematical puzzle to solve – that's where I'm still stuck! But so far the indications are that the puzzle will be worth the solving.'

'Although you are not told the objectives of the adventure there is a lot to keep you occupied. I cottoned on quite quickly that the computer tells you one thing when sometimes it means the opposite. There are some very simple block graphics, but they are not needed. The program is 100% machine code, so the responses are instantaneous, so you can move about very quickly from location to location. The descriptions are not always very detailed, but the computer's responses make up for most of that. I thought this was a tough game that managed to be quite addictive.'

COMMENTS

Response: fast
Graphics: clear text, some simple graphics instantly generated
General rating: an imaginative adventure with some unique problems to solve and with plenty of scope in each defined area. Good value

Use of computer	78%
Graphics	58%
Playability	84%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	86%
Value for money	89%
Overall	77%

In association with INCENTIVE SOFTWARE LIMITED, we are offering £1,000 worth of prizes in the form of Incentive's brand new game, *Millionaire*. Two hundred lucky entrants could win themselves a copy of the game, which sets out to let you become a millionaire out of the games software market.

Most of the answers to the questions set out below can be found either in this issue or in previous issues of CRASH, especially issue No 1 (February). If you haven't got a copy of issue No 1, we do have back numbers available now (plug, plug), see our ad. Some of the answers may require a bit of thinking, but then, if you're going to become a software millionaire, you're going to have to do a bit of thinking anyway!

Incentive Software began life last year in August and is run by **Ian Andrew** and **Ian Morgan**. The company's first game was the very successful maze game which 'yippeed' its way into the charts under the name of *SPLAT!* It was co-written by both Ians and offered a £500 prize to the highest scoring player by January 14th. Hi-scores were all coded for verification and the winner was 17-year-old **James Tant**, of Wokingham. He beat all competition and scored a massive 112,930 points on *Splat!*, which was a formidable achievement considering the game's difficulty. James said his secret was between five and seven hours every day for three months practising.

Before Incentive started, Ian Andrew, a youthful 25 year old, had made his name with another famous game produced by – well, you'll have to look those details up in CRASH as they form part of a question! Incentive was designed as a software company that would offer incentives in the form of prizes attached to is games, hence the name Incentive Software. The base of operations, a shop in Reading, is named after their first game, suitably **The Splat Shop**.

Ian Andrew is something of an arcade games nutcase. 'I search out all the latest video games in the arcades, and I also have a collection of machines in the flat above the shop,' he says. These include a Tempest (Atari) video game, a Zaccara Pintable (Ski Jump), an old Bell Fruit Jackpot one-armed bandit and a table-top football game. As he points out disarmingly, it all leaves very little room for living space!

Incentive has a policy to get away from the normal run of computer games. 'I know there are a lot of people are slowly getting swamped with splendid graphics shoot 'em ups, and they want something a bit different to get their teeth into,' says Ian. Bearing this in mind, Incentive have been moving towards strategy adventure-type games like *1984* and the *Mountains of Ket* trilogy, although they are currently working on all kinds of different projects. Several of these games have come from people who came into the Splat Shop, like **Rob Carter** (*1984*) and *Richard McCormack* (*Ket Trilogy*). **John Hunt**, who wrote *Millionaire*, sent it into Incentive because he liked *1984* so much.

Incentive's next incentive is a video cassette recorder to the first person to complete the *Ket Trilogy*. Parts 1 and 2 are already available, *Mountains of Ket* (reviewed in CRASH March issue) and the new *Temple of Vran*. The final part is due out this summer or autumn.

Meanwhile, it's time to sharpen your wits and put that extensive knowledge of the games software market to good use and win yourself a copy of *Millionaire*. All you have to do is complete the questions below and send the answers to us on a postcard please to:

Become a Millionaire!!!

Millionaire Competition

1. By what factor does the American Billion differ from the British Billion?
2. Which game did Ian Andrew write and release first?
3. What was the software house that released Ian's first game?
4. Fill in the missing word: 'Who wants to be a . . .'
5. Research rather than mathematical genius should enable you to tell us what is the last number in the series: 95, 70, 74, 85, 75, 90 —.
6. What have these words in common? NINE, ENTICE, VENT, CINE.
7. Write another word that goes with those in question 6.
8. Who wrote Millionaire?

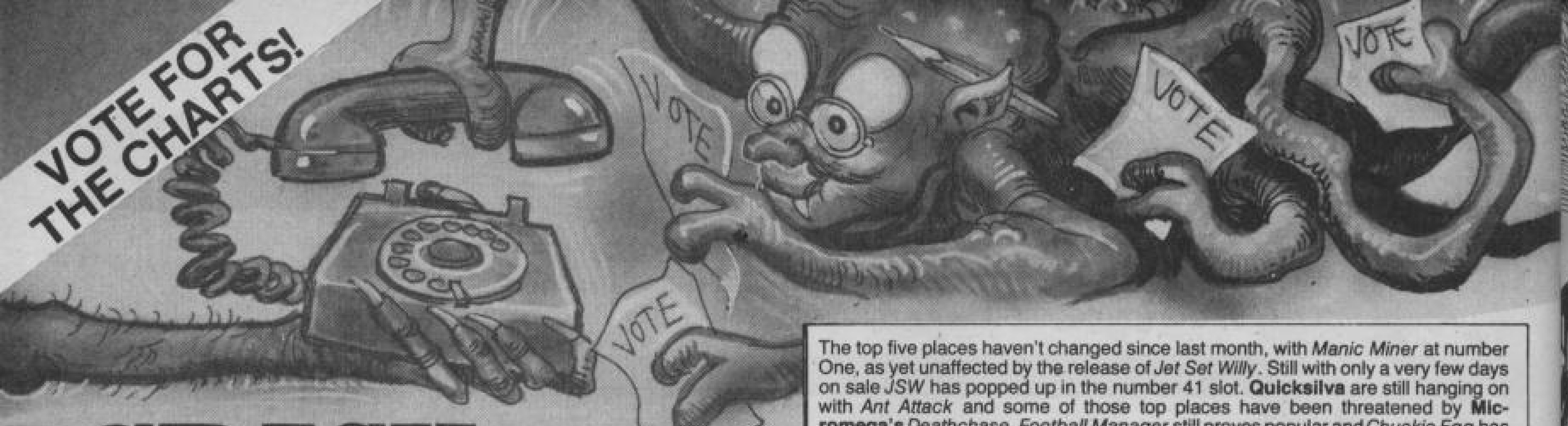
Millionaire Competition

Entries must be received by last post **Friday, May 25th** and the first 200 correct replies out of the bag will each win a copy of *Millionaire*.

Crash/Incentive Competition, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB

SPLAT, winner James Tant





CRASH HOTLINE

The top five places haven't changed since last month, with *Manic Miner* at number One, as yet unaffected by the release of *Jet Set Willy*. Still with only a very few days on sale *JSW* has popped up in the number 41 slot. **Quicksilva** are still hanging on with *Ant Attack* and some of those top places have been threatened by **Micromega's** *Deathchase*. *Football Manager* still proves popular and *Chuckie Egg* has improved. One of the biggest leaps is **Digital Integration's** *Fighter Pilot*, up to 18 places hotly followed by **Durrell's** *Scuba dive*, up 19 places. *Hunchback* took a slide while **Vortex's** *Android 2* has leapt into the lower twenties. Newcomers to the charts are *Oracles Cave*, *Fred*, *Krakatoa*, *Urban Upstart* and *Zaxxan*. Interestingly, adventure utility *The Quill*, which appeared last month has held onto its position, showing that a really useful utility can hold its own against games programs.

MORE & BIGGER HOTLINE PRIZES!!!

Whether you phone in or write in, all names and addresses go into the bag to be drawn monthly. First out will receive £40 worth of software of your choice plus a CRASH tee shirt; and five runners up will each receive three issues of CRASH free plus a CRASH tee shirt.

YOUR VOTE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT — USE IT PLEASE!

HOW TO USE THE CRASH HOTLINE

Method 1
CRASH HOTLINE PHONE-IN. Ring the number below. We have had to install an answering machine. After the recorded message state your name and address very clearly, spelling it out if necessary (if it's an unusual name!) and then state the five games, with producers' names, starting with number 1 down to number 5. Please do this as quickly as possible.

THE CRASH HOTLINE PHONE NUMBER IS 0584 (Ludlow) 3015

Method 2
CRASH HOTLINE WRITE-IN. Use the coupon below, making sure you fill in all the details very clearly. Pop the coupon in a stamped envelope and send it to us at the address on the coupon.

DEADLINE
Votes for the next chart must be in no later than **23 May**. Votes received after that date will go forward to the next month.

If you use the phone-in Hotline, you may have to bear with us — it's already proving very popular, which means you may well find it engaged when you ring. Try again later, and if all fails use the write-in coupon for safety.

CRASH HOTLINE SPECTRUM SOFTWARE CHART

Figures in brackets show last month's position

1	(1)	**MANIC MINER** Software Projects
2	(2)	**ATIC ATAC** Ultimate
3	(3)	**LUNAR JETMAN** Ultimate
4	(4)	**JETPAC** Ultimate
5	(5)	**3D ANT ATTACK** Quicksilva
6	(8)	**3D DEATHCHASE** Micromega
7	(11)	**CHEQUERED FLAG** Psion
8	(6)	**HOBBIT** Melbourne House
9	(14)	**FOOTBALL MANAGER** Addictive
10	(9)	**ZOOM** Imagine
11	(16)	**CHUCKIE EGG** A&F
12	(10)	**VALHALLA** Legend
13	(13)	**PYRAMID** Fantasy
14	(32)	**FIGHTER PILOT** Digital Integration
15	(18)	**WHEELIE** Microsphere
16	(12)	**PENETRATOR** Melbourne House
17	(36)	**SCUBA DIVE** Durrell
18	(7)	**HUNCHBACK** Ocean
19	(15)	**BUGABOO** Quicksilva
20	(19)	**ALCHEMIST** Imagine
21	(21)	**HALLS OF THE THINGS** Crystal
22	(40)	**ANDROID 2** Vortex
23	(28)	**DOOMSDAY CASTLE** Fantasy
24	(29)	**ARCADIA** Imagine
25	(22)	**SCRABBLE** Psion
26	(48)	**TEST MATCH** CRL
27	(34)	**PHEENIX** Megadodo
28	(24)	**STONKERS** Imagine
29	(--)	**ORACLE'S CAVE** Doric
30	(37)	**JUMPING JACK** Imagine
31	(17)	**TRANZ-AM** Ultimate
32	(23)	**PSSST** Ultimate
33	(31)	**SPLAT!** Incentive
34	(25)	**FLIGHT SIMULATION** Psion
35	(26)	**MAZIACS** DK Tronics
36	(30)	**TIMEGATE** Quicksilva
37	(20)	**MR. WIMPY** Ocean
38	(--)	**FRED** Quicksilva
39	(--)	**ADVENTURE CREATOR**
40	(--)	**KRAKATOA** Abbex
41	(--)	**JET SET WILLY** Software Projects
42	(39)	**HARRIER ATTACK** Durrell
43	(43)	**THE QUILL** Gilsoft
44	(27)	**KONG** Ocean
45	(--)	**3D COMBAT ZONE** Artic
46	(--)	**URBAN UPSTART** Richard Shepherd
47	(--)	**ZAXXAN** Starzone
48	(--)	**BARMY BURGERS** Blaby
49	(--)	**DICTATOR** DK Tronics
50	(--)	**THRUSTA** Software Projects

This month's Hotline Winner is Scott Adams, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear. The five runners up are: **Alan Hake**, Aberdeen, **Peter Flynn**, Woking, Surrey, **A. Wells**, Cambridge, **Nigel 'Nutby' Best**, Leeds, and **N.H. Oughton**, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos.

CRASH HOTLINE WRITE IN COUPON

Please use block capitals and write clearly!

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My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



DEREK BREWSTER'S

Adventure Trail



DEREK BREWSTER has been an ardent adventurer for some time, and not content to merely play the games, he put his programming talents to good effect and produced one of the earlier successful adventures for the Spectrum, *Velnor's Lair*, now marketed by Quicksilva. He has also written *Starclash* and *Codename Mat* for Micromega. In this issue he kicks off his new regular column for adventurers and introduces our new **ADVENTURE TRAIL CHART**.

You stand on a high platform overlooking a spectacular subterranean waterfall. The air is sweet and fresh and the cool refreshing spray pours new life into your tired limbs. But this is no place to relax. A warrior from the last expedition lies slain here and you still haven't discovered the key to the northern labyrinth. Stealthily moving east you enter a large cavern of life-like, almost human, statues – everyone a masterpiece, they must have been moulded by the greatest of craftsmen. But who is he? And who collected them in such a remote and dangerous place? Progressing north you eye is caught by a shimmering light. Moving closer you find a gem-studded trident. The gems alone must be worth thousands! Your thoughts are disturbed by footsteps behind you. Slowly turning you hear an insidious hissing sound. Suddenly the words of the Goblin Chief all make sense. Medusa!

Can you escape from Medusa or will you become the latest victim to adorn her home? What is the significance of the trident? Is it the key you have been searching for or only a cruel decoy?

Adventuring is an anachronism.

You are comfortably seated in a cosy room at a microcomputer and all creature comforts are close at hand. Yet you delve ever deeper into an alien world of dark, dank dungeons and man-eating monsters. Sitting at your micro you are passive and relaxed and yet your mind is in turmoil as your struggle in a seemingly impossible predicament. Often in adventure the explorer has an active, decidedly physical, role.

Although an adventure can often seem to be an endless string of puzzles it somehow seems incongruous to have a computer itself in an adventure. Now that space walks and inter-planetary travel are contemporary issues many adventures find their setting in prehistory or are difficult to place in any time. Surrounded by plastics and man-made fibres in the real world, your only aids in adventuring are harvested from Mother Earth Herself; iron swords are thrust into beautifully embroidered leather scabbards, warmth is assured with a thick woolly fleece, and brightly-burning torches are used to seek gold coins. Once again adventures offer us something not readily available in our modern world – hidden treasure that has never seen a deposit account.

It is my conjecture that good adventures are like good novels – they must create a world that is both consistent and believable.

This column is for the exchange of views, ideas and comments, and criticism of games you have played. You may have read our views on the games you have played – now let us know what you think. I hope the column will prove a useful forum for sharing hints and tips. After all, we have all at sometime wished that someone would give us the smallest clue to escape from a prison cell or to cross a bubbling swamp.

So if you are stuck for your next move with any adventure let us know. If we cannot answer your problem we will ask other readers for suggestions.

Large numbers of games are being released each month and the numbers are increasing all the time. Many call themselves adventure games, but this term is becoming broader all the time. After all, no one would call *Planet of Death* or *Snowball* arcade games just because they are set in space, yet many companies call games adventures purely because of a fantasy setting.

in this column I hope to review most of the new adventure releases, revealing what type of game they are and distinguishing those that are worth buying from those that are not!

Any hints, tips, problems or anything of general interest relating to adventure games should be addressed to:

Derek Brewster
Adventure Trail,
Crash Micro, PO Box 10,
Ludlow, Shropshire
SY8 1DB.

CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL CHART

Most computer magazines publish their own charts these days. With only one or two exceptions, adventure games fare badly in these charts. Mainly because few adventurers are stocked by the chain stores who make up the charts.

We at CRASH would like to produce the first adventure chart. This chart will be based on what you think about the games you have played, not on sales figures. This will give the many excellent games not sold by the chain stores a chance of charting. This should prove a much better indicator of which really are the best adventure games than does any other chart.

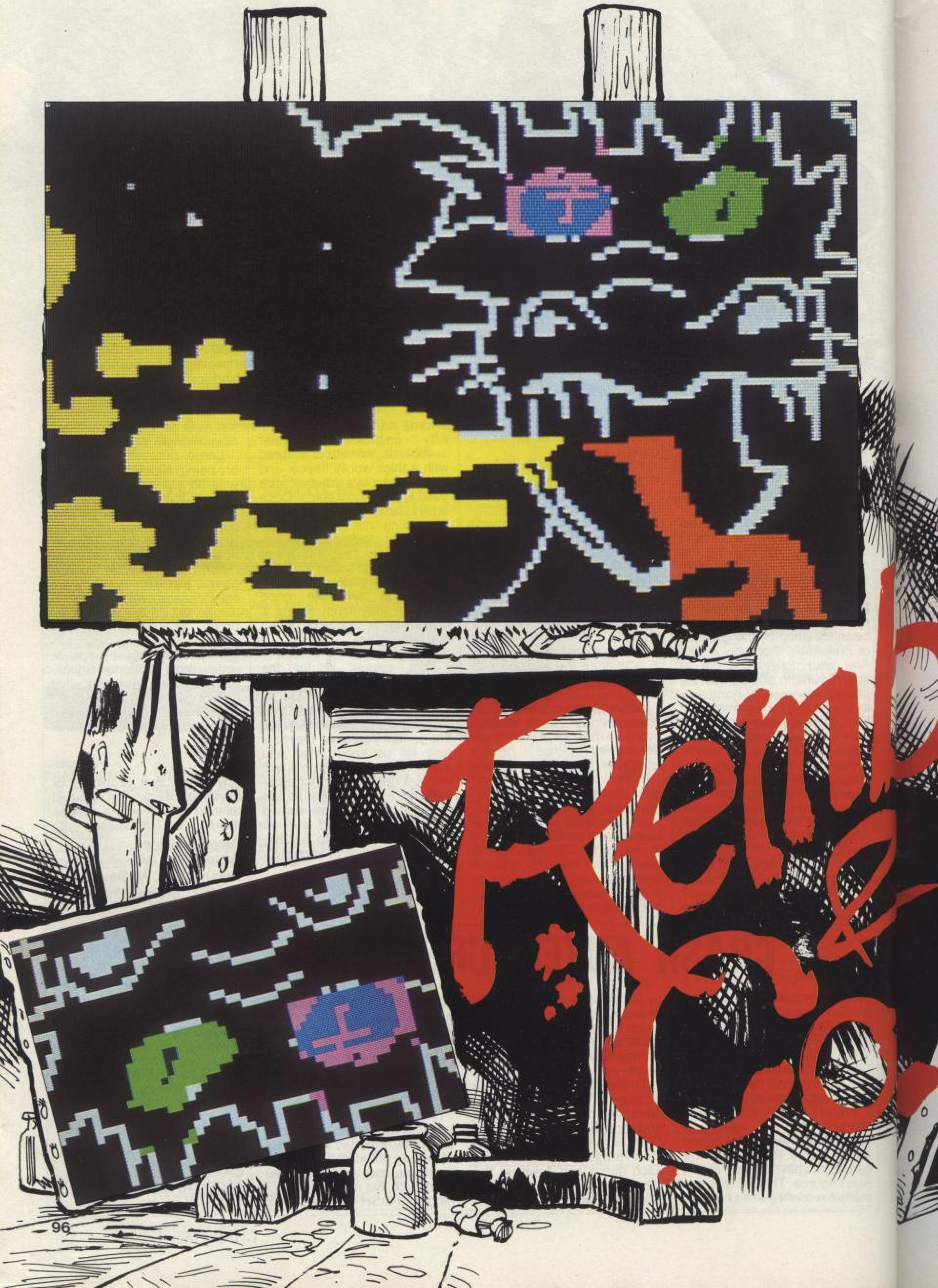
To contribute all you have to do is give the adventures you have played a rating **out of ten** and send these ratings to us at CRASH. We will then calculate the average readers rating for each game and draw up the adventure charts accordingly.

Voting on the **CRASH Adventure Trail Chart** need not affect any votes you might want to send in to the main **HOT LINE CHART**, so don't go dropping adventures out of your HOT LINE votes because you also want to vote for the ADVENTURE CHART!

The names of all contributors will go into the bag for a monthly draw and the first out of the bag will win **£40 worth of software** and a **CRASH tee-shirt**, with five runners up winning a CRASH tee-shirt each.

You may **WRITE** in to us or ring us on the **CRASH HOTLINE PHONE-IN NUMBER** but **please** remember to tell the answering machine that your vote is for THE ADVENTURE CHART. The number is **0584 3015**.

CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL CHART, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB


Remb
& Co.

Can't stand the penetrating smell of oil paints and terpentine? Are you drowning in diluted, diffused water colours? Forget about paint brushes, mixing pots and smeary dirty hands. The canvasses of the future are VDU or television screens and the crayons give way to flexible utility programs. Today the applications are limited by the lack of affordable colour screen printouts, but this is bound to change in the near future.

Every artist will confirm that the selection of the right drawing utentils is of prime importance, and we therefore examine four drawing utilities now available to the budding Spectrum artist.

C.A.D. from **Dream Software**
Dynamic Graphics from **Procom**
Melbourne Draw from **Melbourne House**
Paintbox from **Print'n'Plotter**



Left Top: Smaug from *The Hobbit* with a purple eye.
Below Left: Zooming in on Smaug and showing *Melbourne Draw*'s mirror image facility.
Right Top: A zoomed in close-up from *Terror-Dactyl 4D*.
Lower Right: The title screen of *The Hobbit* as it should really be.

Graphical work on the screen may be subdivided into three main activities:

Background and title screen creation
Creation of user definable graphics (UDG)
Handling of moving graphics (Sprites)

The selection of the right utility depends entirely on the specific application. Not all utilities provide facilities for all three disciplines: each one excels in one of the tasks.

SCREEN CREATION

Screen creating can be a very time consuming job. The basics are simple: set or reset the 49'152 pixels which make up the screen and give the 768 attribute positions the required value. If you provide for every pixel a minimum of 10 seconds for setting or resetting, you will have to work non-stop for five days, 16 hours and 32 minutes.

The colouring works out a fraction faster at two hours eight minutes.

Obviously there are alleviating factors which reduce the required time enormously. Not all the screen has to be dealt with on a pixel resolution. Text and fill areas can be handled in character resolution. Nonetheless it is of prime importance that the utility provides an expedient and proficient way of performing screen functions without having to go through any lengthy function select procedures for a simple screen manipulation. Added facilities such as diagonal cursor controls, screen magnification, window creation, scrolling, etc, give the user extra flexibility and can prove a very useful bonus.

Melbourne Draw scores the highest marks in user friendliness. This progam provides the clearest logical procedure: screen and attribute handling are completely separated. The screen may at first be edited by positioning the cursor with the eight direction controls and then putting pen to paper for the actual drawing movement. The picture, including the usual edit area, can be created in 'black and white.' When satisfied the attribute edit mode is selected and the identical procedure can take place for the attribute character setting.

Melbourne Draw is the only program which allows the attribute cursor to be moved in a non-destructive (pen up) mode. The colour may be selected by simply pressing the correct colour key (ink and cap shift paper). ⇨

FROM CARNELL SOFTWARE



"THE WRATH OF MAGRA" A THIRD CONTINENT SERIES ADVENTURE

The first born has been destroyed. The Black Crystal of Beroth has been banished. The alliance of Evil has been defeated by the armies of Lord Fendal. So ends the Third Age. Now we invite you to write your name in the history of the Fourth Age of the Third Continent.

You will meet friends and enemies, old and new, in the long awaited sequel to Volcanic Dungeon. Using high resolution graphics and combining the best qualities of "Black Crystal" and "Volcanic Dungeon", we will allow you to become part of this tale of revenge.

"The Wrath of Magra" comes as three, 48K programmes on cassette, boxed with instruction manual and book detailing the history of the Third Continent and the many spells you will be using throughout the game. For the 48K Spectrum @ £12.50.

NOTE: "The Wrath of Magra" is a complete adventure. You need not buy "Volcanic Dungeon" or "Black Crystal" to play it.

Available from Feb '84

CARNELL SOFTWARE LTD



Melbourne Draw also provides a screen magnification facility, which can display a portion of the screen four or 16 times enlarged. This proves to be so useful that all the drawing is accomplished on the enlarged scale. The cursor position automatically dictates the screen area displayed and as a further bonus the entire screen may be pixel scrolled to centre the work area. There are no special draw functions such as circle. rectangle, etc, except fill.

The text mode includes the useful option of writing text in any of four orientations (l/r,r/l,u/d,d/u).

The program is aimed at providing a professional drawing board and proves to be a fast and efficient working tool for the serious user.

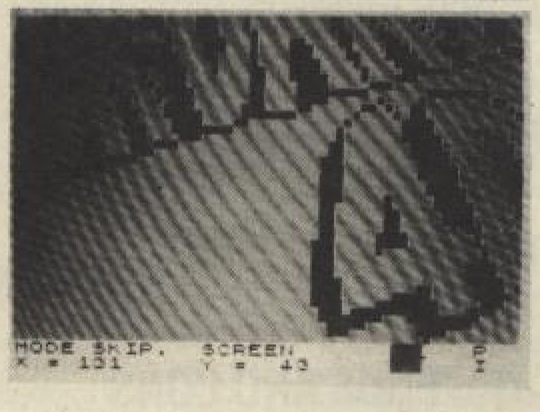
Dynamic Graphics allows the creation of a window of any size, which may be positioned, edited and copied anywhere on the screen,, thus providing for multiple screens or pattern generation within the screen. Further to this there is a rescale option, which will copy any rectangular area of the screen to any other part with different x and y scale. This can prove to be a very potent feature. Special draw commands such as line, circle and edit are also catered for.

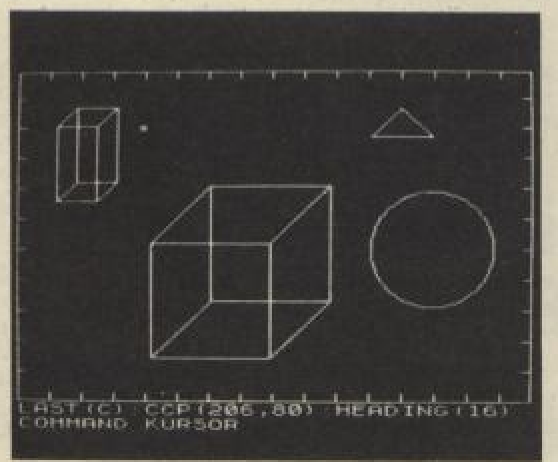
Although *Dynamic Graphics* is first and foremost a moving graphics utility, its inbuilt screen creator proves to be an exceptionally versatile drawing instrument.

Paintbox offers a Kempston cursor control option with its Precision Plotter screen editor. The inclusion of special draw functions such as fill, erase (last command), circle, radial mode and arc together with the option of including any of the 84 UDGs designed with the UDG editor provide for a useful screen tool. The omission of a paper colour control within the screen editor forces the user to go through the lengthy procedure of returning to the main menu for the sake of changing paper colour.

The list of options in the *C.A.D.* program suggest a very powerful drawing tool. However the basic command procedure







of *C.A.D.* proves to be a stumbling block. Every function is called by pressing the appropriate command key, upon which the selected command is displayed in the information window. The user must then press enter for execution. This is even required for positioning the cursor. This all makes for a lengthy procedure, which ultimately takes the fun out of drawing. Apart from the usual cursor control there is the option of using memorised headings, but in practice it is very difficult to make good use of it. The shape creation function, which allows the user to stoe and recall a sequence of drawing commands, proves to be very useful for pattern generation or similar applications. *C.A.D.* has a complete set of special draw commands, which include among other things triangle, 3D cube and 3D rectangle generation.

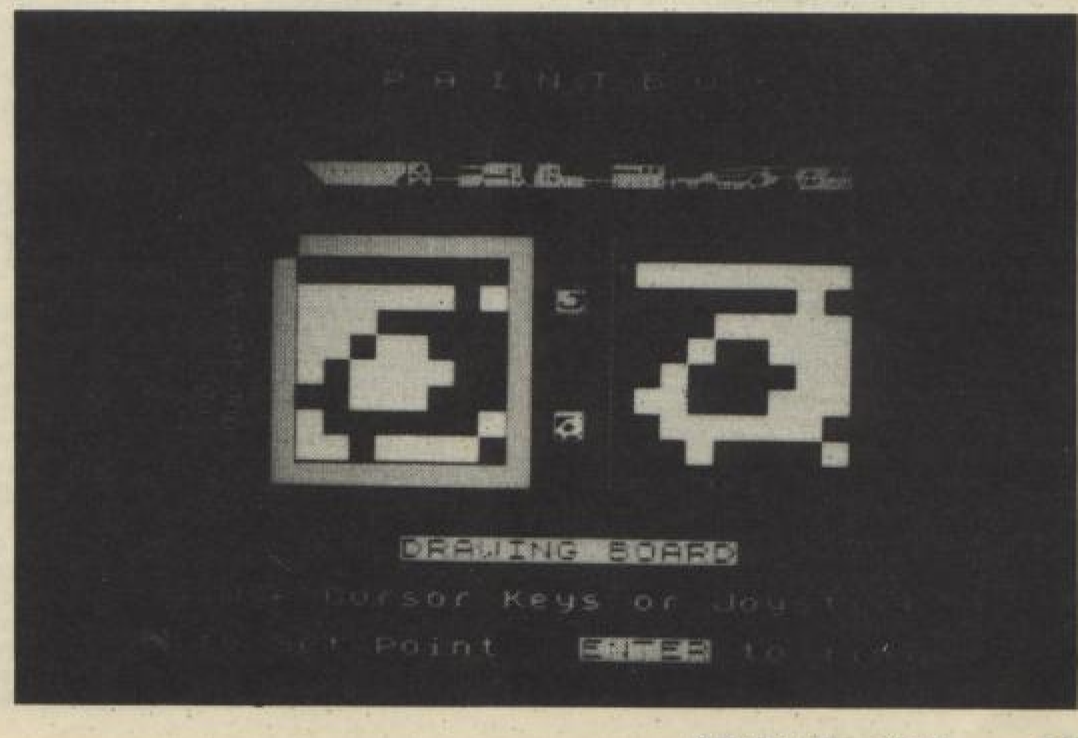
UDG CREATION

Paintbox offers a complete service for UDG addicts. The program caters for four banks of 21 UDGs which can be called into the UDG area for access. The edit facility is complete and practical to use including inverse, rotating and mirror functions. The UDGs are stored together with a M/C routine for calling the individual banks from Basic into the UDG area. A sketchpad is provided for experimenting with related UDGs (multi-character sprites).

C.A.D. offers a less elaborate UDG facility. Up to 26 UDGs may be edited and stored.

Melbourne Draw has no special editing facility for UDGs but editing is accomplished anywhere on screen using the x16 magnification mode. Any of the 760 character positions on the screen may be assigned as any one of the 22 UDGs. Pixel scrolling may position the required shape within the character grid.

Top: A good example of Melbourne Draw's excellent magnification facility, **Left:** C.A.D's special draw commands include 3D cubes and rectangles, **Below:** UDG addicts are catered for in Paintbox,



MOVING GRAPHICS

Dynamic Graphics is the only program to actually handle sprites and sprite movement from within a user's Basic program. *C.A.D.* caters for the creation of up to 40 24x24 pixel sprites (3x3 character), but leaves it to the user to inject any life into the screen. It does no provide any M/C routine for fast pixel to pixel movement.

Dynamic Graphics provides the user with a complete sprite animation facility and must be invaluable for the programmer who doesn't want to delve into the machine code labyrinth but requires smooth animation.

Six sprites of up to 4x4 characters may be generated and edited with the excellent sprite creator. The six graphic characters are treated as individual frames of an animated film and the user may test the resulting motion by selecting the animated display, which sequences the frames on display to create a living object. The character set may then be saved to tape to be called up for later use.

To integrate the moving sprites without any knowledge of M/C, a sprite user subroutine compiler is provided, which creates a sprite positioning subroutine anywhere in normal user memory. This subroutine can be accessed via **Randomize User** commands from within Basic. Up to 10 different frames may be positioned consecutively on the screen and the result (if handled correctly) is a very smoothly moving object.

CONCLUSION

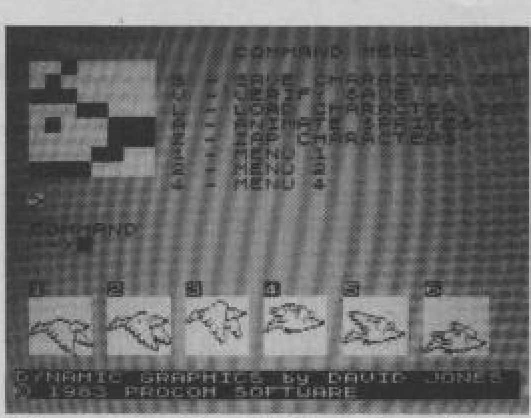
The four programs under scrutiny all have their individual merits.

Melbourne Draw stands out clearly as a professional tool for title and background screen creations.

Paintbox provides the most flexible UDG creator combined with a useful screen editor.

Dynamic Graphics is a must for anybody wishing to create moving graphics within their own programs without bothering about M/C handling.

C.A.D. provides a multitude of different facilities for screen, UDG and sprite editing.



Above: Sprite animation avoids delving into machine code in Dynamic Graphics. **Below Left:** A boat made from **Paintbox's** bits and pieces. **Right:** A Ferrari from **Paintbox**.

THE PROS AND CONS

C.A.D.

Plus:
- Multitude of special draw functions: Line, rectangle, square, triangle, circle, parallelogram, 3D cube, 3D rectangular box, fill, erase (last command)
- Grid display on edge of screen
- Assignment of (A-Z) letter labels to 26 points anywhere on screen for 'Draw by letters' facility
- Shape creation: 26 preprogrammable user commands will perform a series of draw commands (=draw routines)
- Sprite generation: up to 40 3x3 character sprites
- Sprite generation of up to 40 3x3 character sprites

Minus:
- Complicated and slow drawing procedure (select command and press enter)
- Confusing and unpractical heading facility (cursor or preset heading)

DYNAMIC GRAPHICS

Plus:
- Two cursor speeds
- Special draw functions: Line, circle, arc, fill
- Window creation with full edit and positioning facilities
- Rescale of rectangular area anywhere on screen
- Excellent sprite creation: 4x4 character sprite edit facility including animation experimenting
- Sprite user subroutine compiler: Creates relocatable M/C routine for handling up to 10 frame 4x4 moving characters from within Basic

Minus:
- No grid overlay for screen creation
- Complicated cursor direction controls

MELBOURNE DRAW

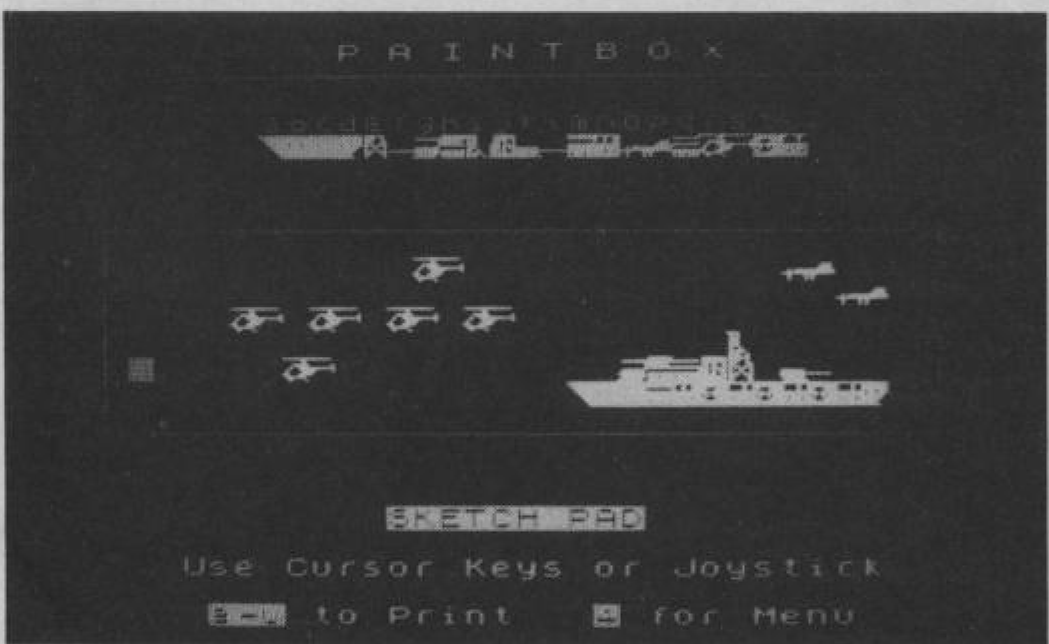
Plus:
- Separate screen and attribute editing
- Attribute skip (pen up) mode
- Diagonal cursor movement
- Magnification x4 and x16 of screen sections
- Fast screen handling
- Grid overlay using Bright facility
- Pixel scrolling of entire screen with wrap around
- Text can be written in four orientations
- Reducing and enlarging of entire screen
- Simple UDG creation of any character on screen
- Full screen available for drawing (information window relocatable)

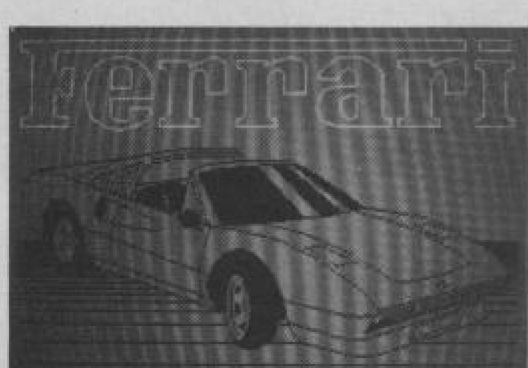
Minus:
- Complicated fast cursor movement
- No special draw commands except fill

PAINTBOX

Plus:
- Two cursor speeds
- Kempston cursor control option
- Special draw facilities: Fill, erase, circle, radial mode arc
- Excellent UDG creation: four banks of 21 UDGs full UDG edit and handling facility from within Basic
- Combined screen and UDG facility (Screen Planner)
- Sketchpad for related UDG display during UDG edit

Minus:
- Long-winded paper colour select







Joystick in hand, Chris Tarrant hosts The World's Greatest Computer Games.

Whilt the short programme is quite entertaining, it suffers a number of faults. First and foremost it only shows 20-odd games across a range of computers, thus showing the consumer very little in his interest area. Secondly, on screen, Mr Tarrant explains that he isn't very good at playing the games, which rather undoes the claim of the producers that the programme shows you how to play them. The third fault, or misconception, is that seeing a game on a TV screen allows the consumer to 'sample' it. There's no substitute for hands-on-experience.

TV Choice have also announced their intention to release another tape which will be a computer games magazine. The intention is to critically evaluate new games on the market and back them up by interviews with the people who make the games.

The World's GReatest Computer Games should be available for sale, rental or merely on view, in computer retail outlets.

CREATIVE SPARK

At Christmas electronic giants Thorn EMI released five games for the Spectrum. But the company has been unhappy with its image as far as the games market goes, and has now rethought the matter. After some considerable brainstorming, according to **Gordon Reid**, Product Manager for Thorn EMI computer software, they came up with the name **Creative Spark**. 'Thorn EMI is not a good idea for an entertainment brand name,' he said, 'and we wanted to get away from the big corporate image.'

The result is twonew games for the Spectrum (reviewed in this issue) and several other for the Commodore 64, Vic 20 and Atari computers. *Tower of Evil* and *Orc Attack* for the 48K Spectrum, are very nicely packaged and retail at £6.95. Both games have been written by in-house programmers at Thorn EMI's Wardour Street programming department. **Sandy McKenzie**, Manager of Home Computer Software, oversees the department, which consists of 22 in-house programmers at the moment.

The five earlier games are now being marketed by Creative Spark, but still in their original packaging, with the exception of *River Rescue*. This will be repackaged because it is also being released for the three other machines. Future plans for 1984 are three more releases during the year totalling eight to nine games for the Spectrum.

Gordon Reid says that they will be keeping an open mind regarding newer computers such as the QL, Amstrad and some of the Japanese machines which are soon to arrive on the market.

SUBLIMINAL

With sales of computer games slumping in America, software houses are grabbing any gimmick they can think of (better and better games don't seem to enter into it over there). The latest craze is for psychological self-help programs, and one of the most talked about at the minute is **Simutech Incorporated's** *Expando-Vision*. For about £80 you can buy an interface and eight programs on disk, cartridge or cassette. This package will then flash messages onto your TV screen at a claimed 130th of a second. At that speed, of course, the eye cannot register anything, but, so the company claims, the brain's subconsciousness does register it subliminally, and the message has an effect.

MAIDEN IN DISTRESS

Christian Urquhart has told us that he is busy on a new game to be released by **Ocean** shortly. Called *Cavalon*, it involves a knight who must hurtle through mazes to rescue a maiden in distress. There is an evil wizard who must first be sorted out before whisking the happy maiden off to a life of bliss. There's obviously a streak of the romantic in Mr. Urquhart who has already helped Quasimodo rescue Esmeralda in *Hunchback*.

THE CUB THAT DOESN'T CRAWL

At last someone has produced a reasonably priced colour monitor for use with the Spectrum computer. **Microvitec** first showed their **Cub** monitor at the March ZX Microfair, where it caused quite a stir. It is now generally available. Measuring approximately 14 inches wide by 11 high and 14 deep, the monitor comes in a black metal case which complements the Spectrum styling. The screen is 14 inches (across the diagonal). Controls are very simple. Placed at the rear is an on/off switch, a tuner and a brilliance control. A small flick switch allows you to set up for the Spectrum or to accept a video input from any other TTL compatible computer, or from a video recorder.

It might seem an expensive addition for the games player, but anyone who uses their computer regularly could hardly fail to be startled by the difference in quality between the **Cub** and their normal TV. The least of the improvements the **Cub** offers over the telly is the loss of 'crawl.' The colours are a great deal sharper and more saturated, and the entire display has a crystal clarity that many people may have believed impossible from the Spectrum. An additional bonus is that it should make your video tapes look splendid too, although being a monitor it obviously suffers from a lack of sound!

After a week's trial by the CRASH reviewing team, we have decided that from now on all screen reproductions in the magazine will be photographed on the **Microvitec Cub**. Not all those appearing in this issue have been done on the **Cub**, but those that have are credited, so you can see the difference.

The **Microvitec Cub** is now available at most good commputer retail outlets, priced **£225 plus VAT**.

QUICKSILVA IN AMERICA

In January of this year the Consumer Electronics Show was held in Las Vegas. Quite a number of British software houses attended the show. We asked **Mark Eyles** of **Quicksilva**, to write his impressions for us. Although the show is now long over, the effect that British software is having in America is still very much current, as Mark's report shows.

The flight to the east coast of America takes a whole night, a long time to be flying over featureless wastes of water, the flight from the east coast to Las Vegas, near the west coast, takes the whole day. America is indeed every bit as big as Americans claim, the entire United Kingdom would be lost in a state like Texas home of Quicksilva Inc's head offices and there are over 50 states. . .

Quicksilva Ltd saw the potential market in America and looked for someone to market its games, various distributors were approached and all found lacking in one way or another and so the right people were sought out to form Quicksilva Inc, a sister company to Quicksilva Ltd. They were Carl Ziegler and Roger Howard, who were found, after much searching, in Paris. They moved to San Antonio, Texas and set up Quicksilva Inc. San Antonio is at the bottom of America mid-way between the coasts and in an ideal position to service the huge continent.

Las Vegas sits in the Nevada Desert and is the gambling centre of the United States of America, gambling is illegal elsewhere in America so all the gambling is concentrated into this one crazy city. Near Las Vegas is the huge Hoover Dam which supplies virtually limitless supplies of cheap electricity which the Casinos use to turn night into day.

In Las Vegas in January 1984 the Consumer Electronics Show was held, and here Quicksilva Ltd and Quicksilva Inc gathered to start their onslaught on the American market. At a stand in one of the small halls Quicksilva unveiled its first products, **Time Gate** for the American Spectrum (the Timex-Sinclair 2068) and **Bugaboo** for the Commodore 64 were among those games on show. The small hall although small in American terms was the size of three or four Earls Courts, the main hall was of the sort of size where one would expect to see clouds forming and small tribes lost among the stands preying on unsuspecting visitors.



Mark Eyles

Also exhibiting their latest game, **Hideous Bill**, on the Quicksilva stand were Virgin Games, who are joining forces with Quicksilva Inc to promote themselves in the USA. The Americans were amazed, they couldn't believe what they were seeing, for in America you will not find the variety and ingenuity that exists among British software houses, in particular the ones which insist on original games and not straight arcade copies. Not only were orders flowing in thick and fast from retailers and distributors but also exhibitors from large American games software houses were coming over to see the games, then going away and coming back with their colleagues to show them and enquire when would they be able to buy them. Quicksilva Inc had arrived after six months of painstaking preparation and America was ready for them.

The internal flights in America are like buses! The plane lands, passengers get off and new ones get on and in ten minutes the plane is flying to the next town and the pilot is saying over the speakers "Hi there, the weather's



lookin' good so you have a nice day y'awl." In one of these the exhibitors from the CES show flew down to San Antonio, home of Quicksilva Inc, Carl and Roger from Quicksilva Inc, Mark Eyles, Caroline Hayon and Rod Cousens from Quicksilva Ltd and Nick Alexander from Virgin Games. We watched out the window as we came in to land looking for the Quicksilva offices which are visible from the plane. We landed finally in a clear cool Texan sunset.

The following morning we arrived at the offices and started to sort out the orders and enquiries from the show. Quicksilva Inc is well established and has its own Disk Duplicating facilities, stores and functions 24 hours-a-day. Cassettes are copied by a large duplicating company a mile down the road, the covers are printed round the corner and lunchtime is spent in a Mexican restaurant with Guacamole and Nachos (these are food and not friends!)

The American market is not just bigger than the English market but it is subtly different, Americans are not keen on cassettes and where possible everything must be on Disk. Although on the Timex-Sinclair 2068 they are content to use tapes, on the Commodore 64 you couldn't give away a program on cassette! The packaging has to be big, at least as big as video cassette boxes and preferably two or three times as big.

Computer games are sold everywhere, in fact while in America we came across Quicksilva ZX-81 games (from a distribution agreement nearly two years old) in one of the large retail chains which sprawl across America. It was an odd feeling to travel half way round the world and then find your games on a shop counter, though a satisfying one. Another interesting aspect of American marketing is that everything is bought and sold with credit cards and money is rapidly going out of fashion.

Quicksilva Inc is now going through a rapid growth phase as the Quicksilva name is becoming known throughout the USA, and Quicksilva Inc is expanding to fill a large gap in the vast American market. This growth is not without its' cost though, for instance to advertise right across the USA is phenomenally expensive, adverts aren't quite 50 times as expensive but in some periodicals nearly so, but the rewards and the promise of this growing market make it a must for Britains leading origin al games software house.

© MARK EYLES

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when I read the review of *Red Baron* (March). Not only did the reviewer think he was going backwards when looking over the tail of this Sopwith Camel, but he thought (quote): 'It's very disorienting if the plane is behind you, you get a view over the back of the plane . . . which doesn't seem very realitic.' Eh?!? Would it be more realistic not to see the enemy plane at all?

Oh, that's it. I've just realised why he hasn't been crushed under a juggernaut – he never uses the rear view mirror!

Sarcasm apart, I thoroughly enjoyed *Red Baron* and didn't find it either 'disorienting' or 'unrealistic.'

Yours faithfully, Baron von Richtoffen (alias Malcolm Higham, Liverpool).

PS. Please donate the £12 to the CRASH Reviewers' Insurance Fund.

I said that's enough of Reviewers' problems! Anyway, smartass, how are you supposed to fly your Sopwith Camel if your head is turned through 180 degrees? How are you going to read your next issue of CRASH if your had is turned through 180 degrees – more sarcasm like that, and that's the way you could be spending the rest of your life! Glad you like Red Baron.
LM

FALLEN OUT

Dear CRASH,

I'm afraid CRASH and I have fallen out.

After owning a 48K Spectrum for one week and buying three games off the shelf without knowing anything about them, only to find all three to be poor, I bought four CRASH recommended games and was delighted.

I then told my son that I'd buy him one game per month – the CRASH NEW GAME OF THE MONTH. What do you do – but recommend five damn Games of the Month at a total cost of £28.85. Please don't do that again or I'll soon be broke.

Yours sincerely, R. Taylor, Nuneaton.

I don't think I've got any answer to that . . .
LM

CHEATS CORNER

We've received so many letters from people with helpful hints on how to cheat at Manic Miner that I'm beginning to suspect I'm the only person in Britain who doesn't know how to cheat. Before we go on to that, how about this:

RIVER RESCUE

Dear CRASH

I have found a way of getting a very big bonus and get on to the next sheet quickly on **Thorn EMI's** *River Rescue*. When the game starts, go about three quarters of the way across the screen. When the dock comes, dock as usual, but after you have docked press keys for back and fire and keep your fingers on the keys until your ship has filled up with nine men. When it is full, carry on playing and then drop your men off. You will now get a big bonus. Now manoeuvre yourself to the centre of the river and wait.

You will see two blue strips coming towards you. Go between them (this will take a bit of practice). Now you will proceed to the next sheet.

Your sincerely, J.P. Weaver, Staple Hill, Bristol.

And Robert Thomos, of Cheshunt, Herts, says . . .

I also have picked up nine passengers instead of the six suggested. This was achieved by going forward (by pressing P) and then docking, followed by pressing O and Ø – simultaneously the ship picks up another passenger. If you go far enough forward you can pressØ and A and this will result in landing at the lower dock.

And so to *Manic Miner*. **Now that** *Jet Set Willy* **is out, I'm sure no one will mind the following routines appearing. Besides, everyone already knows them. We have received 22 letters on the subject. But just in case there is some frustrated Manic Miner out there who hasn't been vouchsafed some Surbiton occult, here's the jist of it.**

First routine is to secure a large or unlimited number of lives. One method says, stop the tape after the picture has loaded, BREAK in, LIST and type: **25 POKE 35136,06⅞**. Then ENTER, type in **RUN** and ENTER that and start the tape again. A better method is to type in before starting the load: **MERGE""**, press ENTER and start tape. When the **OK** sign appars at the bottom of the screen, stop the tape immediately. LIST and type in: **25 POKE 35136,0** and then ENTER it. Both routines create unlimited lives.

A similar routine for a larger but limited number of lives is this: Load for a few seconds until the screen turns black, then stop the tape, type in: **INK 7** and press ENTER twice and a listing should appear. Type in: **25 POKE 34269, n** (where n= the number of lives you want) and then ENTER. Too many lives slows the game down.

The other main routine is designed to let you play on any of the 20 sheets you want and involves pressing ENTER as usual when the loading is completed and the music is playing, but then key in the number **6031769**. A boot appears where the lives normally are displayed. The levels can then be selected by pressing between one and five keys simultaneously. These have been reported in letters quite variously, but the common denominator is the figure 6. When the sheet you want appars on creen, release the keys and start playing. These are the keys which must be pressed simultaneously:

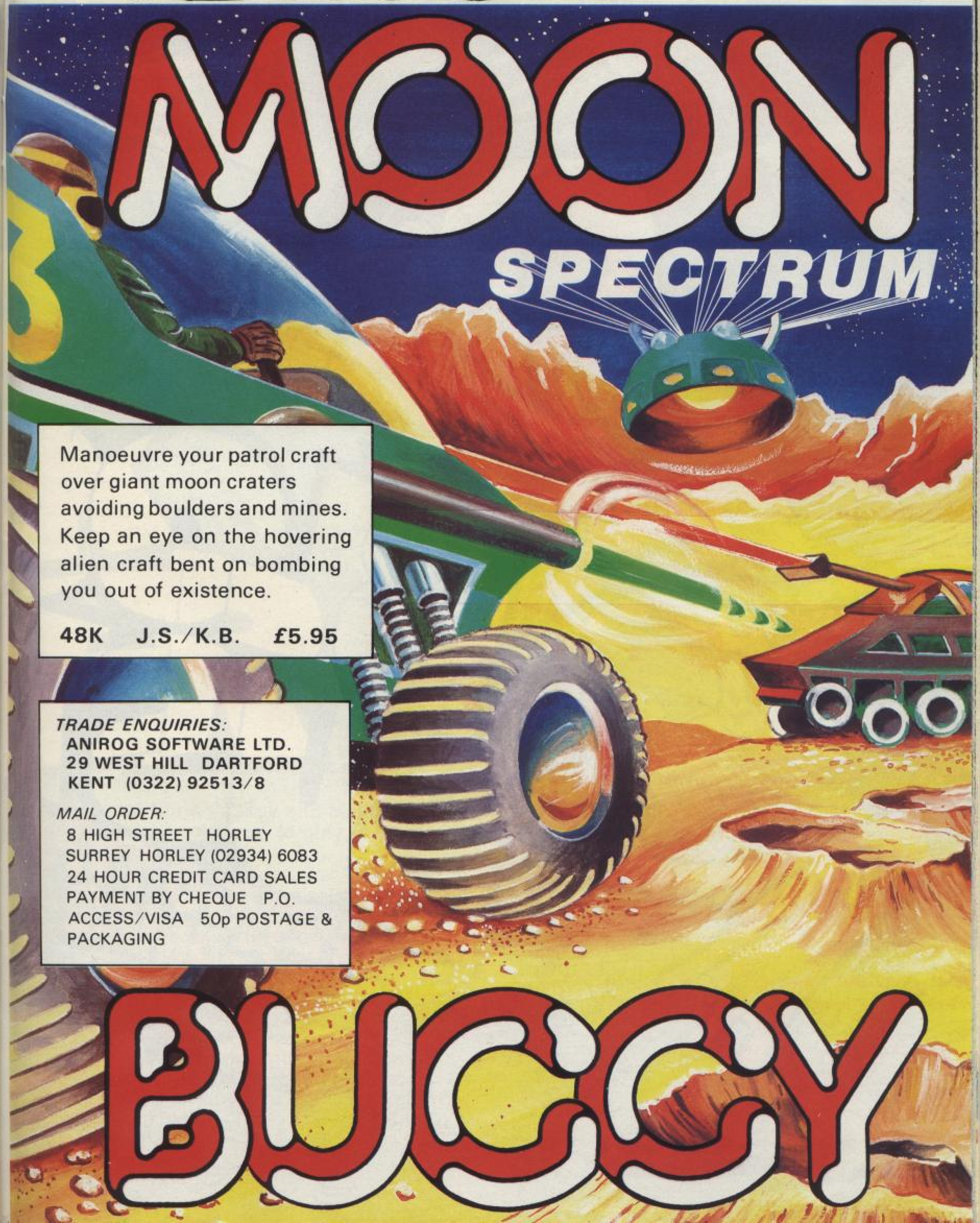
6	Central Cavern
61	Cold Room
62	Menagerie
621	Uranium Workings
63	Eugene's Lair
631	Processing Plant
632	The Vat
6321	Kong Beast I
64	Amoebatrons I
641	Endorian Forest
642	Attack of the Mutant Telephone
6421	Kong Beast II
643	Ore Refinery
6431	Sky Lab Landing Bay
64321	The 16th Cavern
65	The Warehouse
651	Amoebatrons II
652	Solar Power Generator
6521	The Final Barrier

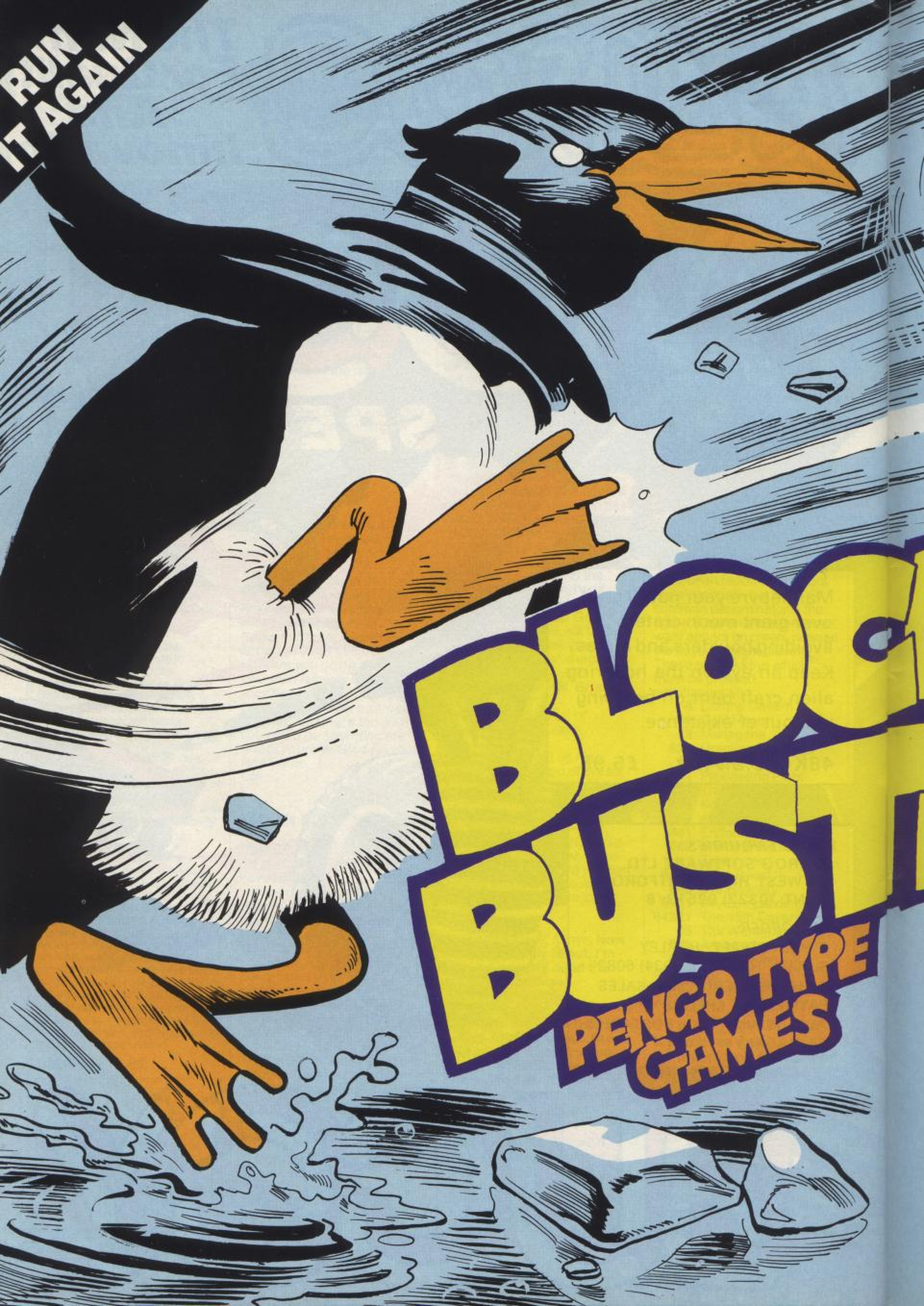
If you have any comments on CRASH, or on Spectrum software, complaints in general, playing tips or hints, and especially any adventure tips you would like to share with others, please write in to Lloyd Mangram, CRASH Forum, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

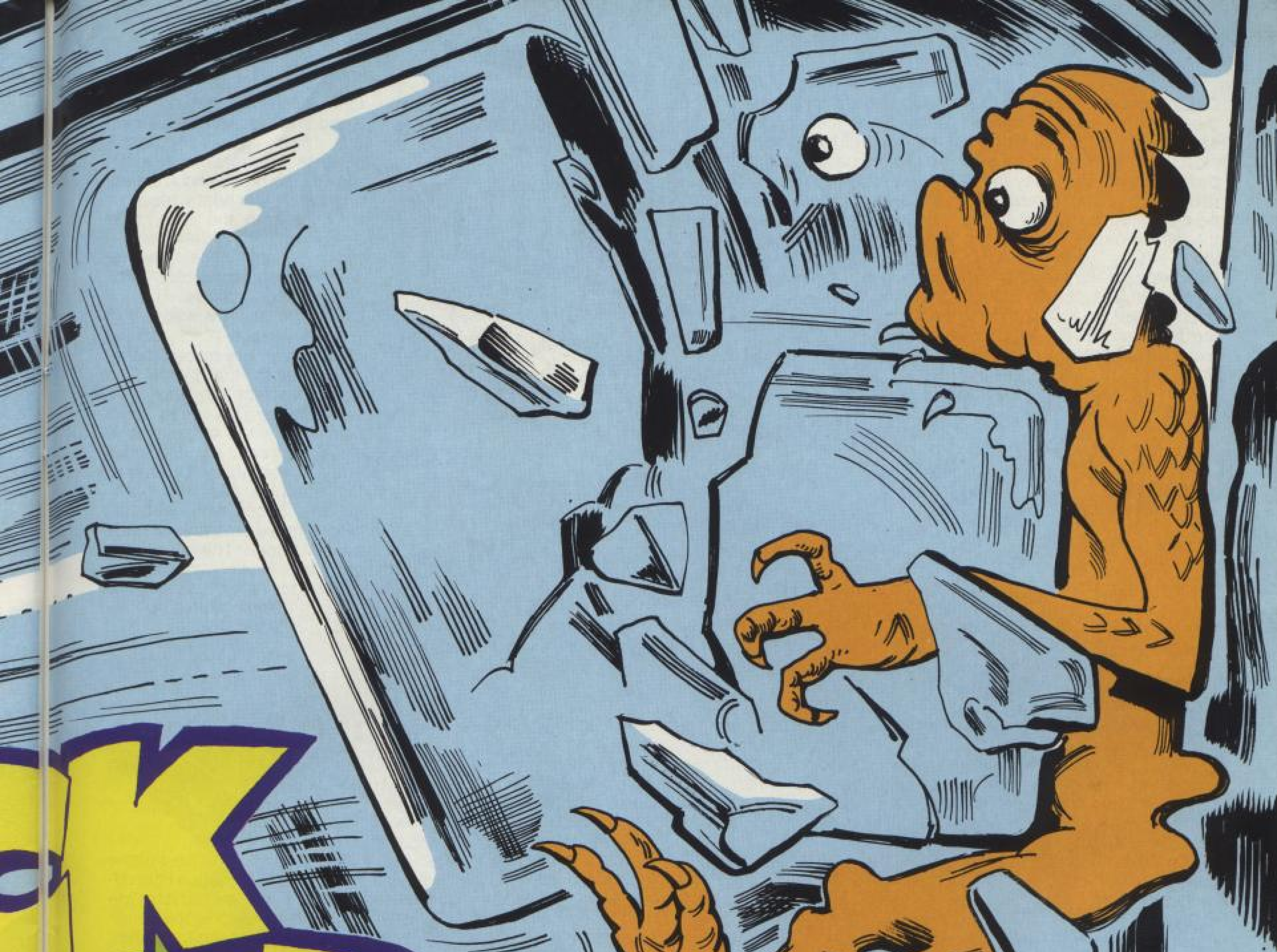


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PENGO TYPE GAMES



Reviewers Chris Passey and Matthew Uffindell don their cold gear to play in the Arctic wastes . . .

The Pengo scenario says that a penguin in the snowy wastes must stay alive by melting ice blocks, or shunting them along to squash the snow bugs which threaten him. The frame resembles one of those small hand-held word puzzles with letters printed on small squares which may be shuffled to rearrange them. The game requires a certain amount of strategic thinking in setting up kills. You can usually 'electrify' the walls (the edge of the screen) and daze any nasties that touch it, running them down if you are able. First in the market was Blaby's *Dodo and the Snow Bees* by a long margin.

Dodo (and the snow bees)

Blaby Computer Games

This is a reasonable copy of the Pengo game and it contains quite reasonable graphics too. They are a little jerky due to the character position movement. As with most Blaby games, the sound quality and content is excellent (Blaby sound seems loud too!). As far as sound goes, it's the best, but for playability it's possibly the worst. Keyboard control is bad because is uses the cursors – Kempston, AGF and Protek joystick owners need not worry though. I found the game average and it has been outclassed on most fronts by others, not surprising perhaps, as it preceeds them all by almost a year and Spectrum software has come a long way in that time. The snow bees in this game did resemble bees, which is more than can be said for most of the rest.
CP

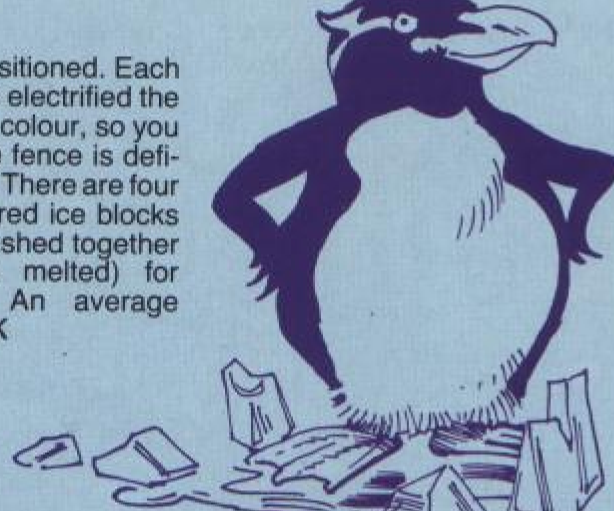
Dodo is the oldest game out of the bunch, and it shows! Movement is by block and slow. The snow bees have a distinct advantage – they move faster than you do. Fences can be electrified four times during the entire game. The screen also seems very cramped. However, the ice blocks move smoothly. The colour is well used. One of the worst points is the keyboard layout, which is exceptionally poor.
MU

Pengy

Micromania

With this game, the title screen provides you with two pictures, one for the game itself and another, which is an advert for *Tutankhamun* – a bit like being in the cinema! On playing the game I found I had difficulty moving ice blocks with the keyboard. When I changed to my trusty Kempston I found I could by using the fire botton. The game's graphics are okay but a little flickery and the sound, whilst well used, is nothing special. This game is enjoyable but I preferred *Freez'Bees* to it. Pengy himself seems to resemble a fat Dracula! One thing to bear in mind in discussing the merits of *Pengy* is that it is in 16K – the only one.
CP

The loading time (with its advertisement screen feature) is very short – great. You are a very ghostly looking penguin, out to squash spongy looking intelligent creatures – well, almost intelligent, actually they're pretty thick, but every screen completed adds another snow bee to the game. Movement of snow bees penguin and ice blocks is smooth and fast. The keys are responsive and well positioned. Each time the fence is electrified the border changes colour, so you can see that the fence is definitely electrified. There are four differently coloured ice blocks which can be pushed together (they can't be melted) for bonus points. An average Pengo but in 16K
MU



Freez' Bees

Silversoft

I like *Freez'Bees* and it's a good version. The movement of the penguin is especially good, and generally all the graphics were of reasonable quality. The odd, blob-like snow bees are particularly comical when they lie 'dazed' against the electricifed wall. Their eyes spin round and round. The sound is good, but again Blaby's is better. The control keys have a decent layout and Kempston owners are catered for. With all its elements and 10 skill levels, this game will never become too easy, but it remains very playable.
CP

Freez'Bees has the most options open to the player, ie you can alter the speed of the game from Ø to 9, there are good instructions, and a useful hold-and-quit key. When pushed, the ice blocks move very quickly to their destination – they also instantly crush the nasties. Freez snow bees are not over-intelligent, thank goodness, but once on your trail they won't let up. The penguin himself waddles about most convincingly. The responsive keys are well placed and both sound and colour have been well used.
MU

Eskimo Eddie

Ocean

What distinguishes *Eskimo Eddie* from the others is that it has two totally different sheets in the game. Ocean did this with *Mr Wimpy*, and while it gives you two games for the price of one it dan be a bit irritating when you want to get on with the Pengo part. Still, a very small quibble and one which mot people will probably disagree with. In the first sheet, Frogger style, you have to rescue Percy penguin from Growler the bear. There are two bears, slow and medium speed, and three jagged ice blocks which cross and recross the screen. You move from tthe bottom to the top, collect Percy, and then return. This has to be done three times before getting on to the Pengo sheet properly. From here on, everything is like the normal Pengo, with electric fences, bugs and blocks. The graphics throughout are very good and smooth and the sound is about the best (after Blaby!) and I liked the small details like the chasing rainbow effect round the edge of the first sheet. All in all a very good game which gets tougher with each screen.
CP

One difference that no other Pengo has is that this version has two totally different screens, the first being to avoid moving ice holes and superbly animated polar bears, rescue a penguin from the other side and bring him safely back – three times. The second screen then resembles most other Pengo games. The ice blocks move very well, but if you do push a block, all the control keys are frozen (sorry, didn't mean that!) until the block reaches the wall or a snow bug. This does pose problems – the bugs have a chance of catching you while you are stationary. Otherwise the graphics are very good, electric fences work well, ice blocks move smoothly and the sound is good. The snow bees get progressively more intelligent as each screen is cleared. A very good game.
MU

Push Off

Software Projects

This was by far the best game in my opinion. It was a little different too, with the ladybird trying to kill garden creepie crawlies (and they trying to get her, of course). Instead of being white, the blocks are a decent garden green. Other changes were bells which, when rung by touching them, meant you could eat the nasties Pacman-style for a while. The graphics are super smooth, easily the best, the creepies have nice detail too. But it can't beat Blaby's *Dodo* on sound! Key control is good and there are lots of joystick options available. The best of the bunch for me.
CP

This is the only one without a bit of ice in sight. Instead you push/throw garden bricks at four different insects, and you are a ladybird. Apart from these differences it plays very like the other Pengos. Instead of electrified fences there are bells which can be rung and turn the insects to jelly. When you eat a jellied bug a bonus score appears, but the bell only rings for a short time. The action is fast, graphics very smooth (unlike most of the others), characters are large and detailed and very colourful. The keys are good and responsive, and I found this to be an addictive Pengo-type game.
MU

Pengo-type games comparison table

The two reviewers' ratings have been averaged, but despite independent assessment of the games, they were very much in agreement.

NB. Despite details printed on cassettes and in advertisements, due to an error Software Projects *Push Off* is not 16K but 48K. The same is true of *Thrusta*.

	Use of computer	Graphics	Playability	Addictive qualities	Value for money	Memory required	Retail price in £
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
DODO Blaby	40	58	51	43	48	48	4.95
PENGY Micromania	60	65	66	53	60	16	5.95
FREEZ'BEES Silversoft	70	75	80	78	75	48	5.95
ESKIMO EDDIE Ocean	88	90	91	80	85	48	5.90
PUSH OFF Software Projects	90	90	90	90	90	48	5.95

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Chatting up Your Sweet Talking Friend, The Spectrum

Ever since I made my Spectrum a present of a **Cheetah Sweet Talker**, it has been grateful and has never stopped bubbling over with Sweet Talk. But then I gave it a **Micro Command** unit and now it listens occasionally to what I say, not always understanding me, but then again I am quite a difficult person to understand. Strange what a difference an affectionate ear can make . . .

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

The mouth of my Spectrum came with an instruction manual and a cassette named appropriately *Chat Box*. The mouth just plugs into the rear of the Spectrum. Once *Chat Box* is loaded, Sweet Talk invites you to its own Chat Show. It presents itself and gets started on a very interesting subject – itself. It won't stop talking about itself . . . how wonderful it is . . . and how everybody ought to admire it. . . . That's when I pulled out the plug and got the upper hand.

I consulted the instructions for use. There it was – a simple example program called 'Cheetah.' I immediately modified the program changing the data statements, looking up the phonems for 'Rabbit' (Cheetah being too foreign), included a loop statement for repeat performance and pressed run: 'RabbitRabbitRabbit-RabbitRabbit . . .'

I hit the break key and thought I ought to behave more responsibly. After all, there are 68 allophone commands to be output and whoever was listening at port 7 obviously had a more selective vocabulary than my budgie and must think me a right twirp. The extension port from Sweet Talker gave me an idea . . .

HAVE EARS WILL LISTEN

Micro Command is better equipped than Sweet Talker. It comes in a bigger box and has a listening device which would do Terry Wogan proud. I played dominoes with the Spectrum add-ons, plugging the Micro Command unit into the Cheetah Sweet Talker into the Spectrum. I soon figured out where the mike plug was at home and loaded the demonstration tape. Micro Command and I got acquainted. We built up an intimate relationship. I suspected however that Micro Command had a bad ear, as I had to repeat every new word four times in a row before it acknowledged it. Once it got used to my spoken word it would understand me at the rate of seven to eight out of 10.

I soon completed the silly game which was supposed to test our relationship and was able to progress to *SheepTalk*. Here the originally keyboard-controlled sheepdog Rex, whose job is to round up the lot sheep in the sheep pen, has been replaced by a new Rex with a hearing aid. I soon suspected however that the battery of the hearing device had gone to the dogs – sorry – was on its last legs, for Rex would not obey me no matter how I shouted.

I consulted the Micro Command Additional Information booklet. Two methods of listening are available: Micro Command listens to the entire word and then analyses it. With the second method Micro Command only listens to the beginning of the word and as soon as it has enough data will make up its mind before the end of the word. The first method may be slower, but error free communication is guaranteed for over 80% of cases. The second method is totally unpredictable, with a success rate of 50% or less. It is my firm conviction that Rex is not only a slow mover but also a fast listener.

However, I have heard from a good source (an ear at court, so to speak) that this is not so, and that the excitement of the game makes my voice unrecognisable to Micro Command. I apologise to Rex and surrender my position to more stoic shepherds.





A MOUTHFUL OF EAR . .

It didn't take long for me to recognise the potential of combining mouth and ear with the Spectrum as grey matter lodged between the two.

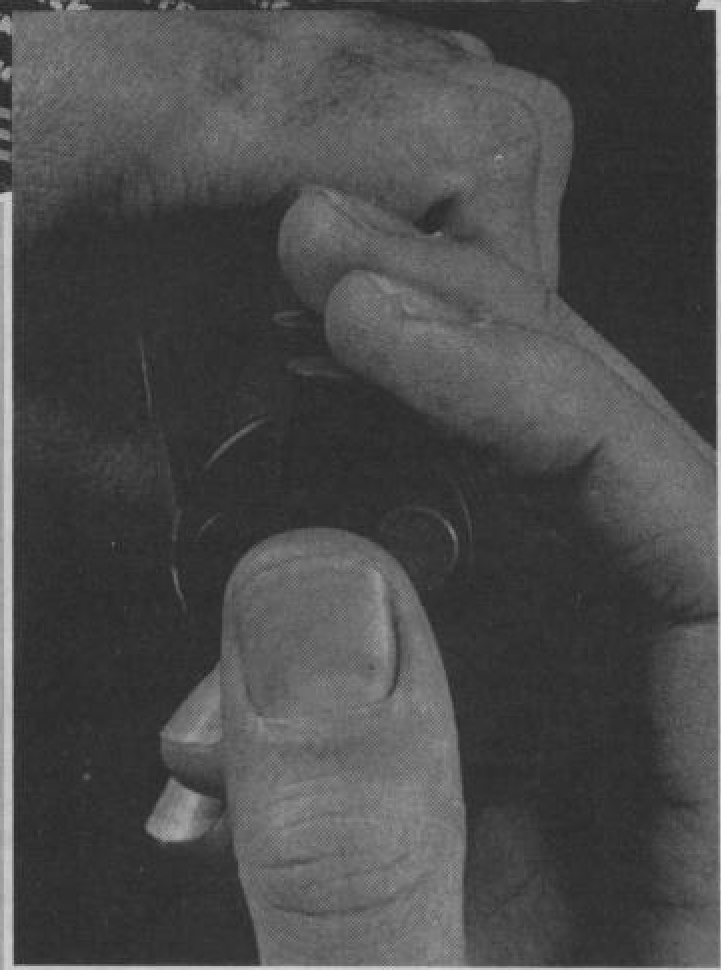
Using the *Teach* program supplied with the Micro Command, I quickly set about using the ear for my very own purposes. *Teach* contains three machine code subroutines, which can be called up via User commands. The subroutine **st2** will perform the learn function, where Micro Command will listen to the next four words uttered and learn and store them as word 1. The subroutine **st1** will now listen to the word spoken and set a variable named aptly 'reply' to the value 1 whenever it recognises this word. Reply is usually Ø if no word is spoken. Subroutine **st3** will condition Micro Command for fast or slow recognition. A maximum of 15 words may be stored and can subsequently be recognised. Success is not always guaranteed as a lot of letters are so similar that recognition is extremely difficult. Having stored 'Hello' and 'Goodbye,' I set about preparing a linking program, which checks when the word 'Hello' is spoken and then controls the Sweet Talker into saying 'Hello' with the appropriate data statements. Similar for 'Goodbye' and wow – my Spectrum behaves like a parrot! Now, by placing the mike near the Sweet Talker loudspeaker and further program manipulation, my Spectrum will plunge into holding a conversation on its own . . . Hey, wait a minute . . .

Of Sticks and Tricks . . .

Many a games player may have wondered what this massively advertised **Trickstick** by **East London Robotics** is all about. The advertisement promises proportional control and patent applied pressure-sensitive sensors. Could this prove to be really the ultimate high-tech ultra-responsive proportional joystick for the Spectrum, a must for the arcade gamer?

CRASH set about looking into the matter and field testing the unit. . .





The Trickstick package contains the hideous control weapon, the Trickstick, together with a narrow interface unit, displaying very shoddy workmanship, and two cassettes containing the software. The User Documentation explains in detail everything you wanted to know about the Trickstick.

The device uses the capacitive effect of the human body to detect the commands of the player. This works in a similar way to the old touch-sensitive switches, but the Trickstick sensor works analogue and can detect varying degrees of pressure (surface and dielectric changes). The Trickstick is blessed with six of these sensors: two at the tip of the unit for left and right movement, two at the upper side for forward and backward movement, and two at the lower side for two independent fire actions.

The documentation gives recommendations for gripping the Trickstick for both left and right handers. The left and right sensors are controlled by rolling the centrally located thumb, while the forward and backward sensors are handled (or fingered) with the fore and middle fingers. The remaining free hand is used to clinch the Trickstick at the lower end and to each for the Fire1 and Fire2 sensor trigger.

Before all this can happen the interface, which is compatible with the Kempston interface requiring input port 30 monitoring, has to be plugged into the Spectrum edge connector port and programmed via plug in crosslinks. Up to eight Tricksticks can be connected, each requiring a different port address (7F9FH to FE9FH). Therefore one crosslink selects the port address and the second selects the work mode: proportional or stop and go mode. As the novelty lies in the analog behaviour of the animal, proportional control is selected and the Trickstick Trainer cassette loaded. Prior to play, however, the sensitivity control situated on the upper half of the Trickstick has to be adjusted to the individual sweaty hand. The setting is found by controlling the aircraft in the game and varying the sensitivity of the sensors until ideal response is reached.

As promised, a certain proportional control can be achieved, but the left and right controls prove to be too far apart for simply rolling the centrally placed thumb over the sensors.

The training game consists of a formation of enemy aircraft chasing the player's plane. The idea is to manoeuvre the plane into a firing position and destroy all enemy planes. Right from the start it is apparent that the Trickstick layout takes some getting used to. The predictability and repeatability of the finer pressure to speed relationship leaves a lot to be desired, but this may well be the result of too little training. Nonetheless the Trickstick was immediately rebaptised the Tricky Stick . . .

The second cassette included a very similar air attack game. The tactic of the game, which starts off with only one enemy aircraft, is to utilise the wrap around edges of the screen to manoeuvre the plane into a firing position and thus gain the upper hand. Once the enemy is destroyed, the game continues with two enemy fighters, then three . . .

The game certainly is fascinating and demanding, especially with the unusual controls of the Trickstick, but the question is whether the analog control actually *is* an improvement over the humble microswitch actuated joystick. To this purpose a large selection of games ranging from *Fighter Pilot* (ideal for analog control) to *Jetpac* and *Atic Atac* (unsuitable) were played and tested with both the conventional joystick and the Trickstick. Various players confessed to noticing little or no improvement over the conventional joystick, most grumbling over the unfamiliar and unrelatable forward/backward movement of the fingers for the up/down movement on the screen.

The document states that the software should be specifically designed to operate for the analog mode to achieve best results. It also gives an example as to how the program ought to read the joystick port, but this looks suspiciously similar to the usual digital joystick monitoring. Faster port scanning repetition rates may improve the analog feel if the unit works with statistical coincidences between a variable on/off ratio signal generated by the Trickstick and the pot read period. But this is only guesswork as no technical information is available.

As with all new and unfamiliar devices, opinions may vary strongly over its merits and disadvantages. Certainly CRASH would be interested to ehar from seasoned Trickstick owners, if there are any yet, what their opinions are as regards the improvement in point scoring over conventional joysticks. . . .



READERS' HELP LINE

In association with the **Guild of Software Houses** (GOSH) we are offering readers a service which should prove to be of great value. In effect it is a Consumer Service to help right wrongs and if all else fails to **write wrongs** as well.

The past couple of months have been very active for **GOSH** with twelve more software houses joining the organisation including Audiogenic, DK Tronics, Widget, Oxford Computer Press, A & F Romik, Artic, C.D.S. and Llamasoft. The present level of membership now stands at 25 and is increasing all the while as more software houses see the benefits of belonging.

A major item on the meeting agendas of **GOSH** is the serious matter of piracy, and **GOSH** is actively lobbying for support over piracy in conjunction with other computer trade organisations. As a result of legal action taken by **GOSH** on behalf of one of its members, a recent police raid resulted in seizure of thousands of counterfeit tapes, illegal copies of programs with cleverly reprinted covers.

In addition to protecting its members, **GOSH** is also concerned with customer relations and has drawn up model terms of trading. It is in this area that **CRASH** will be active. We have already received a number of letters and phone calls from readers who feel they have been treated badly. In some cases the writer had good cause, in some cases a software house has failed to respond to a genuine complaint, and in some cases the complaint was barely justified. A lot of complaints appear to be generated by slow repair times of Spectrums at Sinclair, which falls outside our brief, although any complaints will be investigated where possible.

Our aim is to act as a go-between, with the help of **GOSH** in sorting out problems. Very often software houses lack the staff to cope with out of the ordinary matters, and with the best will in the world delays can occur in processing complaints – sometimes it turns out to be the post! Whatever, we will try and do our best to see that both reader and software house gets a fair deal. If you have any problems and would like us to look into them, write to:

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Please do not use the CRASH HOTLINE, as this is not monitored on a daily basis, and your call may not be intercepted in time.

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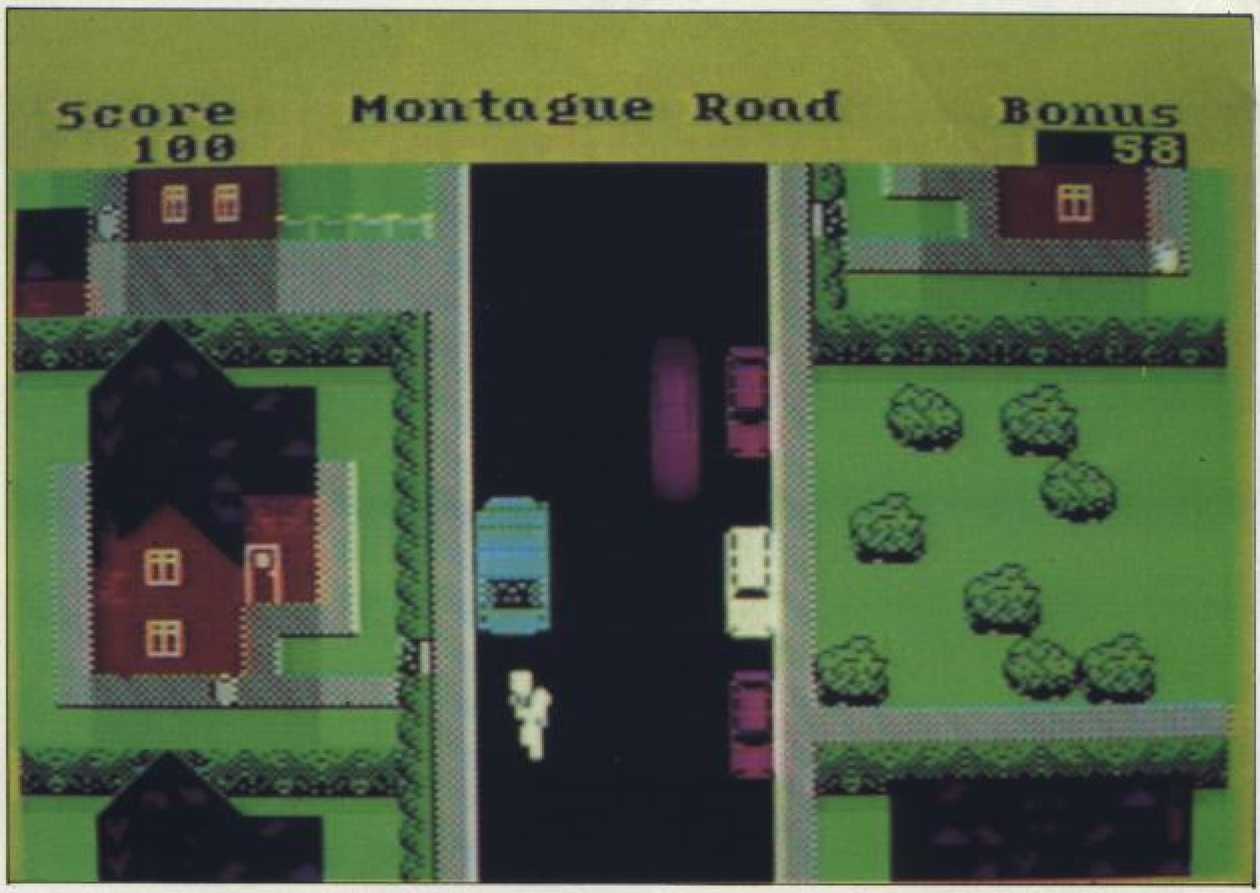
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Trashman



Producer: **New Generation**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Malcolm Evans**

Looking for really original ideas in computer games is almost becoming an art in its own right. **New Generation** seem to have come up with another in *Trashman*. Even the cover design is different from anything seen before, with its dirty, over-crowded dustbin.

As a hero, this is likely to be the lowliest character you will ever play – a dustman. Players (there is a one- or two-player option) enter their names at the start and become the Trashman. The object of the game is to walk up and down a street, entering the houses' gardens, collect a dustbin, take it out to the dustcart, empty it and replace the bin from exactly where it came. You must empty five bins in the first road, Montague Road, and do this against a falling Bonus score. When the bonus reaches zero a message comes up to tell you that complaints have been received about your slowness. After the third such ticking off, you are fired!

The screen display is a bird's eye view, looking down on a rather well-to-do suburban estate, with the road down the centre, complete with parked cars and the dustcart creeping up the left side. The road is busy with traffic in both directions. Problems encountered include getting killed by a car, walking on the grass in the gardens (your bonus score drops more rapidly), dogs which attack you on later screens and wayward kids riding their bikes on the pavement. If you meet a dog or bike you start to limp. The overhead perspective view is an isometric one, showing houses on either side, the gardens, hedges, even the shadows of the houses on this bright, sunny day. On later screens there are also cafes and pubs; entering them increases your points, but over-eating or drinking too much will cause trouble. Bonus points can be added to your falling total in another way. Sometimes, after you hve returned an emptied bin, the householder will come to the door and offer a tip for services rendered. The content of these services is displayed at the base of the screen and replaced with a comment when you leave the house. 'Just give ma ZX81, and I'll control the world,' is a favourite example.

Progressing to the next level (Pulteney Road) requires you to collect six bins. As the trashman's progress takes some time (he's slower when carrying a full bin) he often has to chase after the dustcart, which moves up the road a short distance every few seconds. As the playing area is much larger than the display, and the 3D graphics are quite complicated, the screen doesn't scroll up or down but cuts from scene to scene.

CRITICISM

'The first thing to strike you about *Trashman* is the graphic quality, which is superb. The colours are all bright and solid, but a lot of use has been made of NORMAL and BRIGHT to create the effect of shadows crossing paths and grass. The perspective view is also very realistic and reminiscent of New Generation's *Escape*. It takes a moment's practice to line Trashman up with a gate, but once you get the hang of it's no problem. You must be careful when replacing empty bins, since walking to the correct spot will result in the bin being deposited. If you happen to hve overstepped the mark, when you turn to lave, you pick the damned thing up again. Emptying a bin into the dustcart is easy enough, just walk up behind it and the emptying occurs automatically. The graphics, then, are wonderful, the sense of humour is also very good, and the game is hugely playable. The only thing I want to know is, what really goes on inside the house when Trashman does a favour?'

'The cars on the road are excellent, not only are they detailed but they move tremendously smoothly, at different speeds, in different directions, and at random intervals. The entire playing area is drawn very nicely. Amusing comments are put on the screen if you haven't trodden on the grass and therefore been able to collect your tip. I like the small touches like the cyclists riding on the paths and the dogs which chew your legs, leaving you limping. Trashman *is an immensely playable game that is very addictive at first, but I think that quality might wear off after a while. Nevertheless, it's the best game that New Generation have produced yet.'*

'This is quite a different sort of perspective for Malcom Evans, and it works really well. Great use of grey has been made in the colours, not very common in Spectrum games. All the detail, both in the graphics, the way they more and the game content itself, is very good. I found it playable and fun. Oddly, it isn't a very fast game in the playing, but you soon realise that you must move with accuracy or you won't complete before the bonus score reaches zero. Marvellous value for money, I would say. I don't know how addictive it will be in the long term, but I shall carry on playing to find out.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors
Joystick: Kempston, ZX 2, Protek, AGF
Keyboard play: responsive, but more fun with joystick
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: great
Sound: fair
Skill levels: progressive difficulty by screen
Lives: 3 unless hit by a car!
Features: 1 or 2-player games
General rating: fun, unusual, high-quality game and very playable.

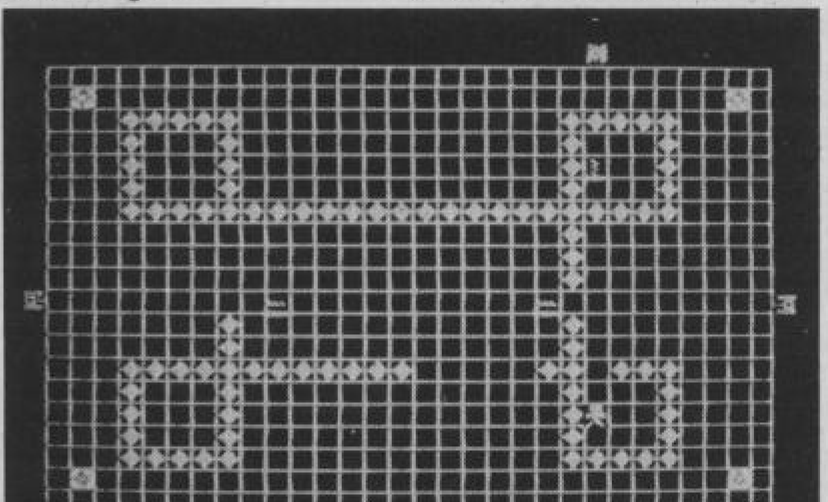
Use of computer	80%
Graphics	85%
Playability	87%
Getting started	86%
Addictive qualities	76%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**83%**



Di-Lithium Lift

Producer: **Hewson Consultants**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code and BASIC**
Author: **Simon Cobb**

With an obsession verging almost on the pathological (not to say paranoid), **Hewson Consultants** are again urging us to our zappers to confront the menace of the egregious Seiddab. Having beaten us down in *3D Space Wars*, invaded our planet in *3D Seiddab Attack*, they've now gone and stolen our Di-Lithium crystals (and life's hell without a Di-Lithium crystal or two). These vital crystals have been placed in a vault guarded by four droids armed with lasers. You must break into the vault and scramble to get the crystals as the seconds tick by. So much for the scenario, how about the game?



Grids and bullets – some *Di-Lithium* needs a lift.

The 'vault' is a 20 x 30 grid of small squares, character-sized, in fact. The four droids are tank-shaped objects which are situated on each of the four axes, firing inwards along the squares, so there's one on top, one on the bottom and one on either side. Each moves and fires independently, homing in on the line of squares occupied by your man.

The crystals are arranged in various patterns on the squares, the patterns change with each screen, and those containing diagonal patterns obviously make you work harder. Collecting is done quite simply by moving over the crystals. The droids move fast, and it is essential that you should not stay on a line for too long. At the corners, and in the most dangerous places therefore, are red crystals. If these are collected then the time limit is increased for the screen. The time indicator is situated at the bottom of the vault.

The program will crash if CAPS and BREAK are pressed at the same time.

CRITICISM

'*Di-Lithium Lift* is another version of *Transversion*, which was produced by Ocean. Comparisons are therefore inevitable. *Di-Lithium Lift* seems to me to be much faster, which is not necessarily a good thing, as *Transversion*'s pace was deceptive, and anyway allowed you to get further into the game. On each of your lives in *Transversion*, you restarted collecting at the point you died – another factor which allowed you to get quite a way in quickly. In *Di-Lithium Lift* each life starts out afresh with all the crystals back again. This makes it more frustrating. And, I must say, that on the whole I found *Transversion*'s colour scheme a bit easier for playing. On the good side, *Di-Lithium*'s graphics are very fast and smooth and there is an option for user-definable keys, which is essential with such a fast game.'

'Your task is to collect all the crystals on the grid. This is not at all easy because it's a race against time. To help there are the time crystals placed in the corners of the screen, but you can't get at them without getting shot. It's a very fast game, but that's as far as it goes. The game speeds up and slows down according to the pich of the BEEP. I thought this was an impossible game to play. It looks very like Ocean's Transversion, *but that was much more playable.'*

'If you like a very fast, very simple game, then you may like *Di-Lithium Lift*. I say "may" because in my opinion the programmer has made the game too hard, stacking up the odds just that bit too much to make it very playable. There are seven screens, but after some hours of playing I haven't managed to get beyond screen 3. After a bit, this becomes frustrating in the bad sense of the word rather than the good arcade sense. Nevertheless, there are probably players who will find this game a challenge worth taking just because it is a tough one.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: user-definable
Joystick: most types via UDK
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: average
Graphics: small block characters, but very fást
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 7 with increasing difficulty
General rating: fast and tough, perhaps too hard to be really addictive.

Use of computer	69%
Graphics	61%
Playability	57%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**61%**

Olympimania

Producer: **Automata**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.00**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Andrew Stagg**

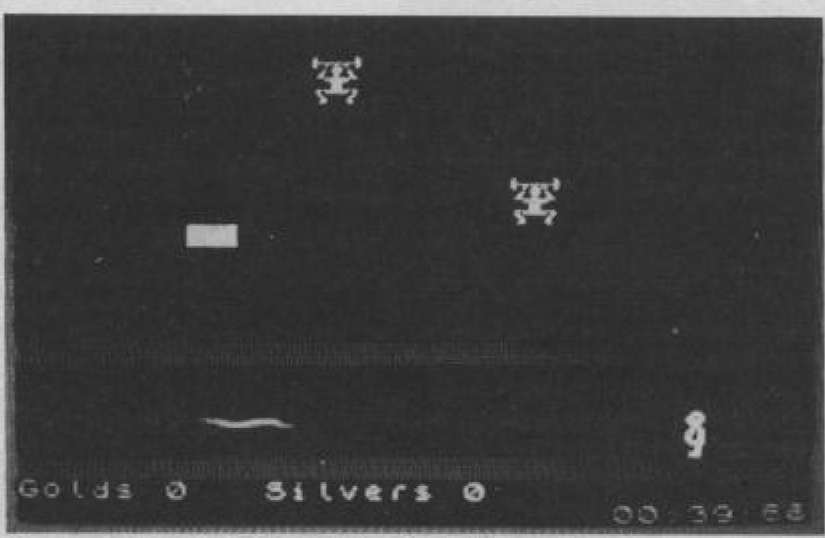
Automata, never laggards for a bit of topicality, have taken the noble sporting event known to the sane world as the Olympics, and turned it into a travesty of running, jumping and swimming. The Piman, having recovered from his drunken binge in *Pi-Eyed* and the bouncing balls of *Pi-Balled*, has taken himself in hand and is going for gold.

Olympimania offers the average armchair pimaniac not three, not four, but an astonishing FIVE events in which to compete. The Pijump, Alpiskiing, Steepichase, the Pitathalon and, for a soggy finish in the Olympi pool, the Butterpi.

The game takes the form of a platform game (of sorts). In all but the last event, each screen contains four layers. Along each the Piman, suitably attired for the particular event, must travel, jumping over obstacles, avoiding the faster competitiors by jumping and letting them pass underneath, and thus finish the screen. A following screen offers more hazards. Should the Piman achieve a high score (per frame) and get a bronze, silver or gold medal, he may mount the winners' rostrum. Between each event, there is a screen set in a crowded auditorium with the rostrums in the centre. Medal winners get to take their places, failed Pimen dash over







On your marks, get set, Go – and the Olympimaniacs are off.

the rostrum to collapse in a fit of tears and ground thumping on the other side, while the crowd behind applaud.

The game is compatible with the **Currah Microspeech** unit which offers amplified sound and an intoning voice saying, 'On your marks, get set, GO!' It also announces the name of each event in which the Piman is about to take part. The Pijump involves jumping over hurdles while avoiding another jumper and an overflying bird. In ski-ing there are fir trees and the same other mad competitor. Steepichasing sees him mounted on a prancing horse with fences to jump and another rider. In Pitathlon he has to leap weight lifters and then compete against other swimmers in the Butterpi. Unfortunately the Piman's swimming lane is monster infested, but he may dive under them once per length. It's all quite silly and charming.

CRITICISM

'First and foremost, *Olympimania* is quite hard, but, most of all, it is fun. A thoroughly enjoyable piece of silliness that actually works as a good game. Timing is tricky, especially when you complete a level and drop down to the next to find the maniac other competitior knocking you off your feet. Needless to say there is also a free hit single to enjoy while playing, as it says, a choral extravaganza *The Piland International Anthem*, which starts off with Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream" speech. Dreadful!'

'*Another crazy game from Automata that has no real purpose in life! The game is quite enjoyable at first but then sheer frustration takes over in the struggle to get gold in each. The graphics are very detailed, smooth and fast – but there are some odd-looking birds! Skill takes a back seat to luck in this game – but then that's what the Olympics are like really! It's great fun to play, but I don't really know whether it's to be recommended as a serious game. Still, if you know Automata you'll probably be prepared to take the risk.*'

'Each event is nicely done, and I particularly like the between event screen with is animated crowd, and touches like the advertising hoardings around the side proclaiming Kempston and Currah. *The Piland International Anthem* is awful and, as usual, in simply excruciating taste – it'll probably make number one. Good value on the fun level, not really an arcade addict's long-term game.

COMMENTS

Controls keys: Ø speed up, 6 slow down, 8 jump or dive
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: simple and responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: very good, smooth and fast
Sound: fair
Skill levels: three difficulties by screen on each vent
Lives: calculated as the three difficulty levels, ie Bronze, Silver and Gold
Features: Currah Microspeech compatible
General rating: zany, silly, almot certainly worth it if you're a Pimaniac, generally quite hard, not madly addictive.

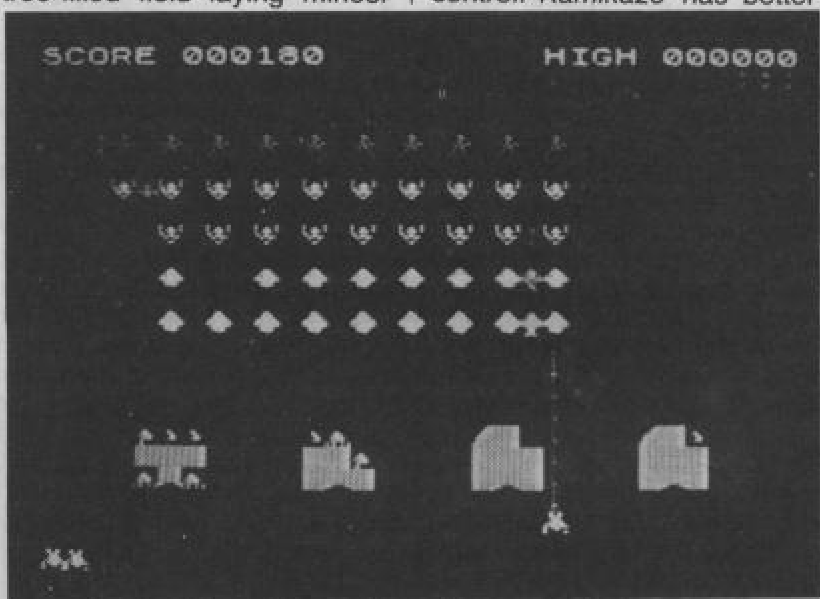
Use of computer	69%
Graphics	72%
Playability	68%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money	55%
Overall	**66%**

4Star

Producer: **J.K. Greye**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **BASIC and machine code**

4Star is a games compendium featuring *Invasion*, *Kamikaze*, *Minefield* and *UFO*. The four games are each loaded separately one after the other as you choose to play them.

Invasion is of course what it says, complete with eroding shelters. *Kamikaze* is a mini-'Scramble' with open landscape and corridors. *Minefield* has you driving a car around a tree-filled field laying mines. You must cover as much of the field as possible without hitting a tree. *UFO* is a shieldless space craft which you must fly down the screen through a host of asteroids. Obviously, as you get lower down the screen, it gets harder to anticipate where the asteroids will appear. All four games were copyrighted in 1982.



Superfast Invaders in *4 Star*.

CRITICISM

'*Invasion* is a very fast version of you know what. Although it has all the features the graphics are not smooth and the invaders shower bombs at an unrealistic rate. The program also crashes if you let the invaders reach the ground, and you are then unable to play a second game. *Kamikaze* is a poor 'Scramble' game with small character block graphics. *Minefield* is frustration at its best – or worst! *UFO* is a scrolling ZX81-style game. I think this package should have been called "The Four Most Frustrating Games!"

'*Four rather old games here, nothing very startling. The Invader is possibly the fastest I have ever seen. All the games have small, very simple graphics and they are all very dated. Even though there are four for the price of one, they still represent very poor value. I would just prefer a good game.*'

'The Invaders game is not very addictive and it is hard to control. *Kamikaze* has better graphics as far as colours go, but everything is very small, so it's hard to be even vaguely accurate. *Minfield* is a bit pathetic and personally I think *UFO* is stupid. All in all, a waste of time and money.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: variable depending on game
Joystick: cursor key sticks in some games
Keyboard play: not very responsive
Use of colour: poor
Graphics: very small, fair
Sound: above average
General rating: generally a waste of money

Use of computer	32%
Graphics	38%
Playability	15%
Getting started	47%
Addictive qualities	5%
Value for money	15%
Overall	**25%**

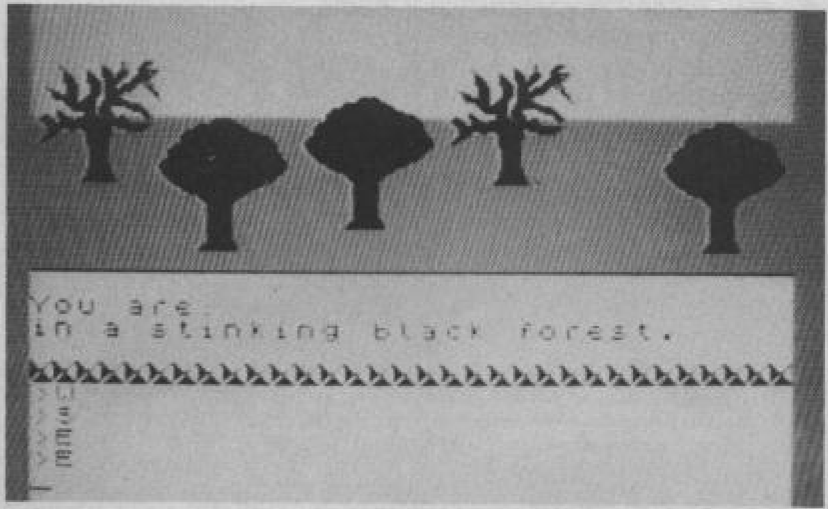
The Quest for the Holy Grail

Producer: Dream Software
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Chris Newcombe**

This claims to be the world's 'funnyised' graphics adventure. It is 'inspired' by the film Monty Python and the Holy Grail, and its cover includes a salacious white rabbit sanguinely licking its bloody chops. For those who have seen the movie, the reference will not only be obvious, but bring chills of fear you may have thought you had been able to forget!

Packed in a sturdy cardboard box, the cassette comes complete with a small, amusing booklet which places you firmly in the correct period, that is 932 AD (after dinner), not 932 BC (before computers). You are Sir Tappin the Basic, a knight of Arthur's round table, and as one of his elite band you are about to embark on the Quest for the Holy Grail. Things aren't going to be too easy, however. One problem is that the peasantry of Mercia are not exactly convinced Arthur is their true and rightful king as they don't readily believe in the 'farcical aquatic ceremony' as they have come to call it, when Arthur attempted to discard Excalibur. Then there's a peasant called Eugene (imagine this a software industry in joke coming) who doesn't like Arthur at all, and therefore not his knights. Bumping into Eugene at the wrong time can result in death for having trampled on an Inagime advert. You can contemplate your folly as he batters you to death with a worn-looking Vic 20. Finding the Grail is a problem, getting back to Camelot is another, and getting in is yet another. Watch out for the French guard with his distasteful habits – remember, handkerchiefs had not been invented in 932 AD.

The scene is set at the start, where you find yourself in a blacksmith's forge populated by a nuclear powered lamp, a CND picket and a yellow/green key. The CND picket are singing, 'We Shall Not Be Moved,' what next . . .



Never mind stinking forest, watch out for guards with their filthy foreign ways. . .

CRITICISM

'It is claimed to be the first funnyised graphics adventure. I'm not sure about first, but it certainly is funny, and it does have graphics that are very good. True to the Monty Python style of historical accuracy, there are lots of details which help to recreate the period flavour like street lighting, motorways and nuclear disarmament. Dying in the first few minutes may take the form of being battered by a computer, walking into a cesspit (authentic) or being snotted on by a guard (nasty).

'The adventure itself is quite simple in concept but does require the correct sequence of events to happen before it can be fully explored. It is also livened up by the humour and the graphics, some of the best I've seen recently. Not quite up to Hobbit *class, but very good.'*

'Keep clear of the rabbit! Those teeth are sharp. *The Quest for the Holy Grail* is novel because of the humour and historical anarchy, although I thought more humour could hve been wrung from the location descriptions than has been. Response time is medium fast, and it's useful to turn off the graphics. This doesn't actually speed up the response, but with the graphics on location descriptions appar first and a key press brings up more details, when they're off, the whole lot scrolls up at one time. My overall reaction is that, as an adventure it's above average, but in truth the insert booklet is funnier than the program.'

COMMENTS

Response: medium fast
Graphics: generally reasonable, some quite detailed
General rating: unusual, amusing and good value for money.

Use of computer	69%
Graphics	67%
Playability	78%
Getting started	77%
Addictive qualities	72%
Value for money	76%
Overall	**73%**

Encounter

Producer: **Severn Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **BASIC**

Encounter is a classic-style adventure with text only. Your task is to find a young girl kidnapped by thugs, and as the short instructions suggest, 'everything you need is here, but you may have to manufacture some items.' On top of that, it might help if the investigator has some knowledge of chemistry (clue).

Most commands are of the verb followed by noun form. Ominously, you are warned that once the alarm goes off you have only 20 minutes before you are caught. As there are an overall 500 moves to complete your mission of mercy, a map would obviously help. The game starts out from a deserted market square.

CRITICISM

'Quick response times on this adventure ensure a rapid exploration of the locations. I found myself whizzing down alleys into forests, past abandoned cars, into gardens, into a multi-roomed mansion – where I suppose the kidnapped girl was hidden – and all without much sense of purpose. This despite the many items littered along the way, ranging from knives, ladders and assorted coloured dusts and powders which (hint, hint) were no doubt meant to be mixed into some infernal explosive device or other to effect an heroic rescue! But unfortunately the whole place seemed so bereft of life – apart from a dangerously growling dog – that I lost interest rather quickly.'

'This looked like it should be a good adventure, but somehow the location descriptions are so bare, and in so many all you are told is that you can see nothing of interest, that in the end I thought it felt like a landscape in search of a script.'

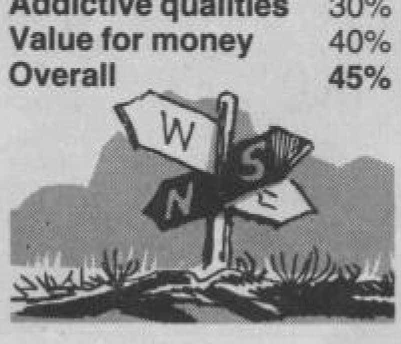
'You start in a deserted market square and start exploring. There are lots of unusual things such as coloured powders, hose pipes and fishing nets. The powders must be to make a bomb with, because it is easy to break into the program and in the listing are several references to bombs and bangs. Then you meet up with a dog who eventually kills you. What I couldn't figure out, was how to kill the dog. I typed in "kill dog" and the computer replied, "Good idea," but I never killed him.'

'Killing the dog is a good idea, says the computer, but nobbling the programmer might have been a better idea. It's about time software houses realied we expect more from adventures nowadays than we used to, just giving fast response times to input is not enough. Below average.'

COMMENTS

Response: reasonably fast despite BASIC
Graphics: text only, blue text on bright yellow background plus tally of moves made
General rating: below average

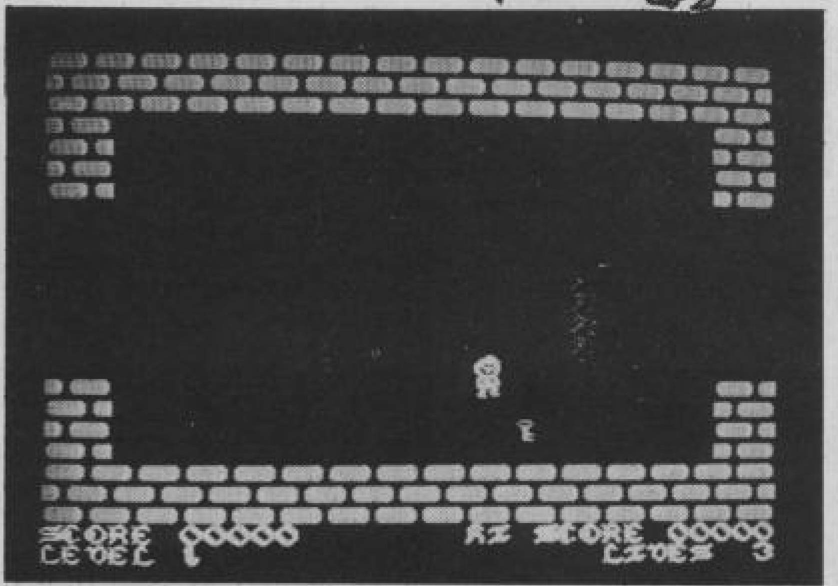
Use of computer	65%
Playability	40%
Getting started	50%
Addictive qualities	30%
Value for money	40%
Overall	**45%**



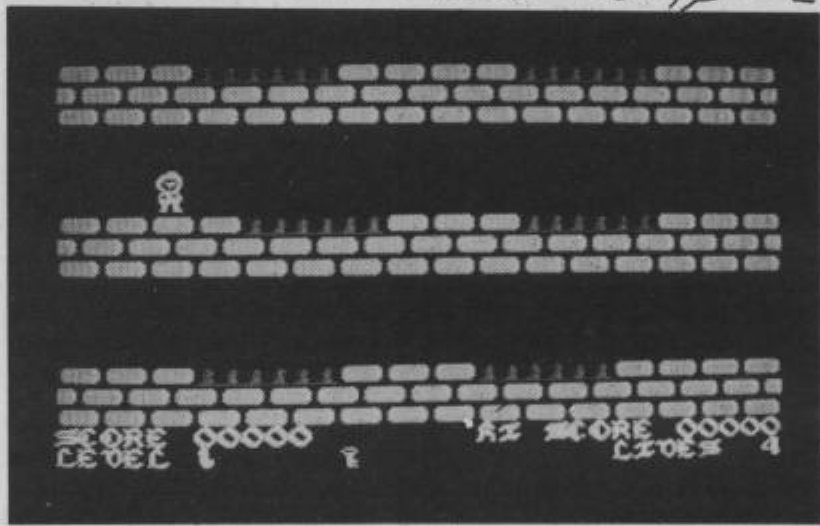
Tower of Evil



Producer: **Creative Sparks**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **J.K. Wilson**



Loads of meanies, tons of nasties and bucketsful of beasties –



a warm welcome in the *Tower of Evil*.

Creative Sparks is a new software company in name at least, in fact it's really **Thorn EMI** with a new front. They have released two new games for the Spectrum this month. **Tower of Evil** is a very fast arcade game not unlike **Atic Atac** in concept. It isn't as complex either in the graphics or the scope, but it isn't simple.

You play the hero, Andros, who has been banished from court until he recaptures the King's treasure from a wicked Necromancer and his minions. The game is played out in the Tower of Evil, which consists of five floors, each with nine rooms. There are nine treasures to be collected. Each floor contains a treasure, a key and possibly a goblet containing one of two potions, one will grant temporary invincibility and the other increases the strength of you firepower.



To get from one level to another, you must be in possession of the key. Red doors lead upwards, and blue ones go down. This is fairly important because there is a chest on the bottom floor, into which treasure must be placed if it's to be kept safe. Loss of life on a floor will mean key and treasure being lost, so it's worth going down to the chest to store it, especially as you get points for collecting treasure rather than for shooting the minions.

Between each floor there are firepits to cross. Andros must run along a floor, leap two pits, move up a level, leap two more and repeat the process on a third before emerging on a new storey of the Tower. At the same time the evil Guardian is hurling fireballs, across the pits.

Each floor has its own dangers, Beelzebubs on the first, which twitter about the place in hordes, trying to hem you in; Valfors on the second which do the same but shoot back; Xaphans on floor 3; Demi-Clones on the fourth, and flying Baphonets on the fifth. Andros is able to fire in the direction of movement. On each floor the rooms are connected by doors, which tend to be the most dangerous place to hover, since the nasties come flying through at high speed, and straight into you.

CRITICISM

'The only drawback to this otherwise excellent new game, is the lack of sound during play. A pity since the medieval sounding tune played between games is lovely. Still, it's a small quibble, as *Tower of Evil* is ultra fast. The speed of the graphics is quite amazing, you can zip about the floors like a mad thing. When a nasty hits you, you explode into little bits, and then you're put together again for the next life. With each floor progressed through, life gets tougher to hang on to, especially as you face the fire pits again, and again. It's fairly simple in concept, very fast and therefore, I think, pretty addictive too.'

'Andros isn't very big, but he's quite detailed and jumps with tremendous gusto over the fire pits. These can get very difficult when there are fireballs coming from both sides. Unlike some of the earlier Thorn EMI games, this one has very sensible keys, and it needs them to cope with the speed of the game. A nice feature is that the layout of the rooms and the start locations of the treasure, key etc, change from game to game. Sometimes, there are even butresses in a room which weren't there the time before.'

'Another original game has appeared on the market, which requires co-ordination and a fair amount of luck. The aliens are not over intelligent, but you still have a good chance of getting killed, due to the fact that there's so many of them. Finding treasure and the key can be a problem as the aliens tend to pick them up, and they only come back when you re-enter the room. The graphics give the impression of being very "solid", and when you get killed, I love the explosion and the way your molecules all reform about the nucleus again. Colour is used well, but there is zero sound during the game. A highly addictive, fast game.'



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, bottom row jump/fire
Joystick: Kempston ZX 2
Keyboard play: highly responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: fast, smooth, generally very good
Sound: good tune, none during game
Skill levels: progressive by floor
Lives: 5
Screens: 10 with nine rooms per screen
General rating: Very good, fast and addictive.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	86%
Playability	88%
Getting started	92%
Addictivity	90%
Value for money	80%
Overall	**87%**

Update:
Location: Dyson Sphere solar system: Co-ordinates unknown. **Subjects:** Crash survivors from Starliner 'Arcadia'.
Objective: Return crash survivors to Earth.
Method: Find and activate alternate space vessel. **Result:** Invalid method: No vessel available.
Next: Cross fingers: Get lucky. . .

THE TERMINAL MAN





STORY BY KELVIN GOSNELL© DRAWN BY OLIVER FREY©


VERY WELL — EXPLAIN!
JUST KEEP 'EM TALKING, CONFUSE THEIR LEADER — YOU'LL FIND IT EASY...
ENTRY TO THE CITY IS FORBIDDEN WITHOUT PAPERS!
BUT WE COME SEEKING A HEALING MAN FOR OUR FRIEND THERE...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM — IS IT CATCHING...?
NO, NO. HE IS JUST SIMPLE IN THE HEAD — WANTS TO PLAY GAMES ALL DAY LONG, HUMOUR HIM — HE'S NOT VIOLENT...
WHICH ONE?
WHICH ONE WHAT?
WHICH ONE'S GOT THE COIN UNDER IT?
THAT ONE — SAW YOU PUT IT THERE!
WRONG!
'ERE — THAT'S A BIT CLEVER —
BET YOU CAN'T DO IT AGAIN!
I'LL BET THIS TRINKET AGAINST THAT BELT OF YOURS THAT I CAN —
YOU'RE ON, IDIOT!
THIS REALLY IS QUITE AN INTERESTING GAME — I'LL BET YOU A GOLDEN VILG...
MONEY! YOU DARE OFFER ME MONEY! ONLY THE FINEST BELT WILL DO — I HAVE THE FINEST COLLECTION OF BELTS IN THE LAND AND YOU OFFER ME MONEY!
INDULGE THE POOR SOUL, GENERAL...
WE HOPE TO GET HIS ECCENTRICITIES CURED SOON,
VERY WELL — MY MEN ARE ENJOYING THE SPECTACLE, CONTINUE...

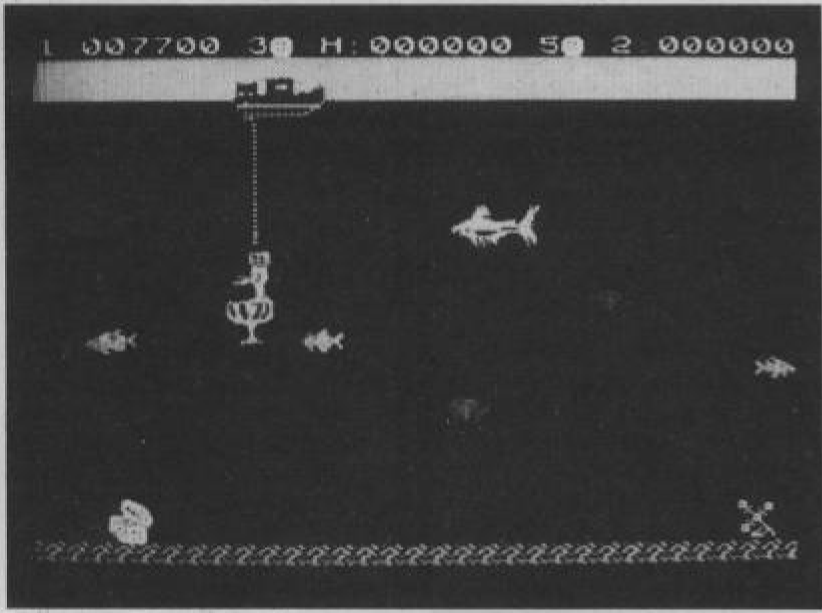


Next: Ritual of Purification...

Reviews

Glug-Glug

Producer: C.R.L
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Stephen Evans**



Jetpac under water in CRL's *Glug-glug.*

Under-water games seem popular themes lately. Perhaps computer games are echoing the scientific interests of the late 60s and early 70s where a disaffection with the space race resulted in a development of what was referred to as the 'Inner Space.' Rather than go whooping through the canverns of some far off planet in a laser-equipped ship, we're now diving under the oceans of the computer game to collect valuables from the sea bed.

In *Glug-Glug* you are fitted out with a hefty deep sea diver's suit which should be protection against all but the biggest giant squids – only it doesn't seem to be! The screen depicts the sky as a thin sliver of pale blue at the top, with your somewhat insubstantial looking boat floting above the black void. The diver is connected to the boat by his life-line and may be lowered to the sea bed. Left and right movement is effected by moving the boat above, with the diver haplessly following.

On the sea bed are several glittering golden objects per screen to be recovered by touching them and carrying them up to the boat, where, by some scientific sleight of hand, they disappear into the boat, so that your diver may return for the next object. He can only carry one at a time.

The sea is filled with wild life: small yellow fish which later gang up into shoals which would make Piranha look tame, squids, jelly fish, sharks and crabs. Fortunately the diver is equipped with a gun to shoot them, for if any touch him he's dead. The crabs are the worst in a way because they linger on the sea bed, below the effective line of fire. The more screens you progress through the more the fish proliferate, until it begins to resemble a zoo aquarium. Floating mines attached to anchored tethers also make an appearance and effectively prevent you from taking advantage of the wrap-around screen to escape the fishy attentions. Sharks also have the endearing habit of eating through your diver's lifeline, with unenviable results.' Scoring depends on how many fish you shoot and how much treasure you recover.

CRITICISM

'The Piranha shoals act as though they had a heat-seeking ability, and head straight for you. Graphics are smooth and detailed with some nice animation, and there is a good use of colour throughout. The game has an odd sort of addictive quality – I like it. With each screen it gets progressively more difficult and with 32 levels to get through it should take some time to master. My only criticism, on the negative side, is that the score line is too crowded so it's difficult to see what's going on.'

'Glug-Glug *is almost a marine equipment of Ultimate's* Jet pac, *and it does have graphics of a very high quality, especially the explosions, which are very similar to those in* Jet pac. *A good, reasonably original, game with plenty of levels to play through.'*

with a few yellow tiddlers behaving more like goldfish than "denziens of the deep," but *Glug-Glug* works itself up quite fast into a difficult game. The graphics are entertaining and nicely detailed, which makes it enjoyable to play. The controls are well placed and very responsive. I would say that it should appeal on most counts and prove medium addictive.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: A/Z up/down, /SYM SHIFT left/right, SPACE=fire
Joystick: Kempston and Protek, AGF (cursor keys may also be used, if preferred, by selecting joystick mode on returnable menu)
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: smooth and detailed, very good
Sound: average
Skill levels: 32 progressively difficult
Lives: 5
Screens: 32
Features: sound on/off selection
General rating: well above average to very good, not necessarily very challenging but quite addictive anyway.

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	85%
Playability	84%
Getting started	74%
Addictive qualities	74%
Value for money	78%
Overall	**78%**

G-Force

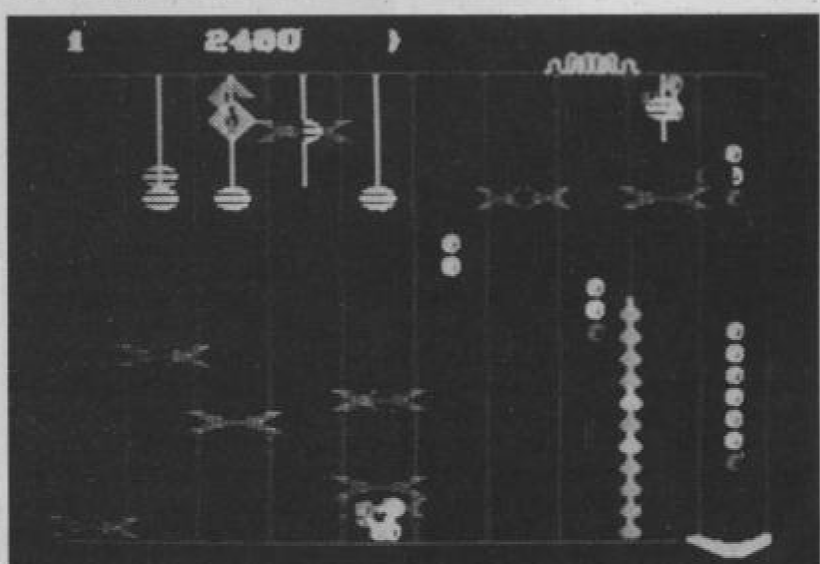
Producer: **Euro-Byte**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Boris Baginski**

Euro-Byte games have been around for some time, but we have never seen one reviewed. Euro-Byte itself appears to keep a very low profile as well. There are two games reviewed in this issue, *G-Force* hêre, and *Pod. Pod*, however, appears to ahve been sold to, or marketed through, **Visions** under the new name of *Rapedes*, and a review of it can also be found in this issue.

F-Force is a hard game to describe as it fits in with no known categories and resembles no other game we have seen. It is a shoot 'em up – that, at least, can be said. It is played on a grid made up of 10 vertical columns. Your ship is at the base and may move left and right, firing ping-pong balls up any of the columns, at the aliens which drop down from the top. There are six types of alien, although you won't encounter all at once until the higher skill levels are reached. **Flippers**, a red X-shape, are common and move randomly back and forth as they descend. **Tankers**, purple diamond shapes, move down a column quite slowly, and if shot split into two Flippers. **Spinners**, looking like a mini molecular structure mode, are the most common and move down a column at various speeds from slow to very fast. **Spikers** look like cotton reels on a thread, dangling from the top in a column. They stretch down, leaving spikes which kill at the end of a frame if you survive (the whole grid scrolls down and the spikes will stick you if you remain in a column under one). **Pulsars** run along the top of the grid and drop deadly bombs, while lastly, **Fireballs** move all over the screen.

Extremely busy bonus screens between frames give details of scores, level reached and aliens to be encountered before a countdown from 10 starts. There are 32 levels to play through.

An unusual game of pure speed – G-Force.



CRITICISM

'*G-Force* is, quite simply, the most original shoot 'em up game for the Spectrum I have seen. (It is similar to an arcade game with 3D perspective graphics, although *G-Force* has 2D graphics.) The graphics themselves are good but not really super smooth. Mind you, this type of shoot 'em up game doesn't really need super smooth graphics to make it work. I enjoyed it, and with 32 levels I think I will be playing and enjoying it for quite a while too.'

'Everthing about this game is untypical of anything. The graphics all look as though they've been designed by someone who is familiar with the Spectrum (obviously!) and yet has never seen a typical Spectrum game before. The result is quite different. The between-screen breaks look more like one of those title sequences from an American TV movie where everyone's name flashes by so fast you can't read them. This results in a needed breather which isn't irritating by being too long. The keys are well laid out and very responsive. A very busy game and very addictive too.'

'*G-Force* is unique in many ways: firstly, if two-player mode is selected, then each player may enter the game at whatever level they choose, allowing a good player to match a poorer one. With 32 levels of play the game will keep you busy for a month or so. Even level one is fairly difficult to play. A fast action shoot 'em up game with plenty going on all at once, great bonus screens, and a game that can't be compared with anything else. I ,can recommend it for those with lightning responses and very strong fingers!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: G/H left right and F/J superfast left/right, 1 and 00=fire
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: excellent responses, simple to use
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: very good, large, detailed and more well if suddenly
Sound: good
Skill levels/screens: 32
Lives: 3
Features: 1 or 2 player games with independent level starts
General rating: high unusual shoot 'em up with very good appeal and plenty of addictivity. Recommended

Use of computer	68%
Graphics	75%
Playability	85%
Getting started	66%
Addictive qualities	88%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**79%**

Moon Buggy

Producer: **Visions**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Jon Dyte**

You are stranded (for some obscure reason) on an alien planet where aliens attack from above and the sides, and the ground is full of holes. *Lunar Jetman* had to get out to fill them in, but technology has obviously advanced, and the makers of *Moon Buggy* have provided it with a sort of pogo stick underneath which bounces it 20 feet into the air to clear the potholes.

The guns fire straight ahead in the direction of travel as well as straight up. Up above, crowds of aliens jiggle and waft about, dropping bombs in a constant rain, while from either side various weapons cruise just above the planet's surface in your direction.

Should you get hit by an alien or bomb, or fall into a hole, the buggy doesn't explode, but does something more original – a wheel flies off! With each screen cleared, more and varied aliens appear. Also the position of the holes in the ground alters.





CRITICISM

'A good game with quite good graphics, especially the buggy and the aliens. The colour is very well used, with the ground changing colour on each screen. One problem with the instructions – it says LOAD "" when it should say LOAD "" CODE. Quite playable and medium addictive.'

'The game has a good use of colour with smooth and very detailed graphics. It can become very frustrating when you are almost on the point of clearing a screen and something goes wrong. It is an original idea, but in the end it is lacking something in content.'

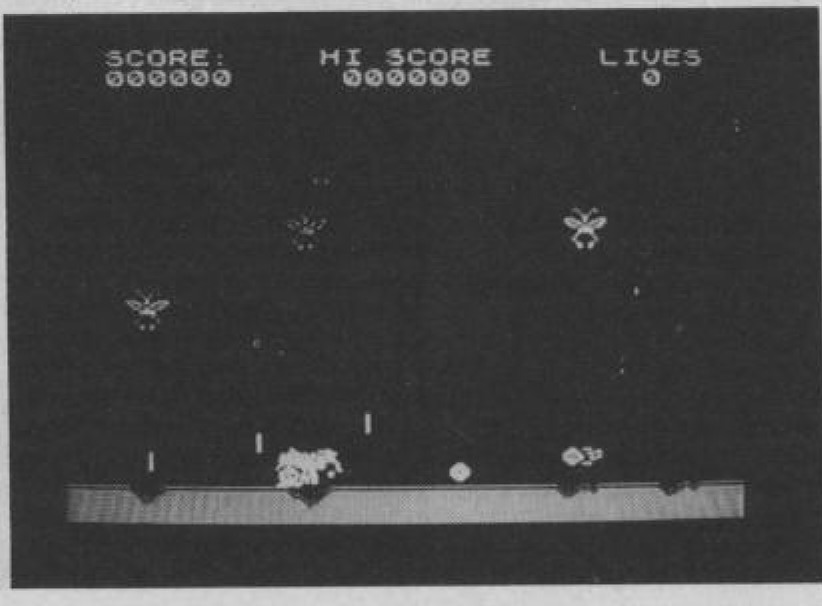
'Pity about the incorrect LOADing instructions. The game is very playable, with sensible control keys which are responsive. The moon buggy is well drawn and the variety and animation of the aliens is very good. The flying aliens have a knack of staying near the edge of the screen where you are under more threat from the ground huggers. *Moon Buggy* also boasts one of the best hi-score facilities I've ever seen. However, it fails to be completely addictive and remains a good, original sort of shoot 'em up.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/P jump left/right, A to ENTER=fire, alternate keys on the bottom row for left and right
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: smooth and very detailed, good explosions and plenty of variety
Sound: continuous, average
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
Screens: 8
General rating: average to good, medium addictive.

Use of computer	63%
Graphics	68%
Playability	61%
Getting started	45%
Addictive qualities	55%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**58%**

Whoops! There goes another wheel! Moonbuggy faces aliens from all sides.



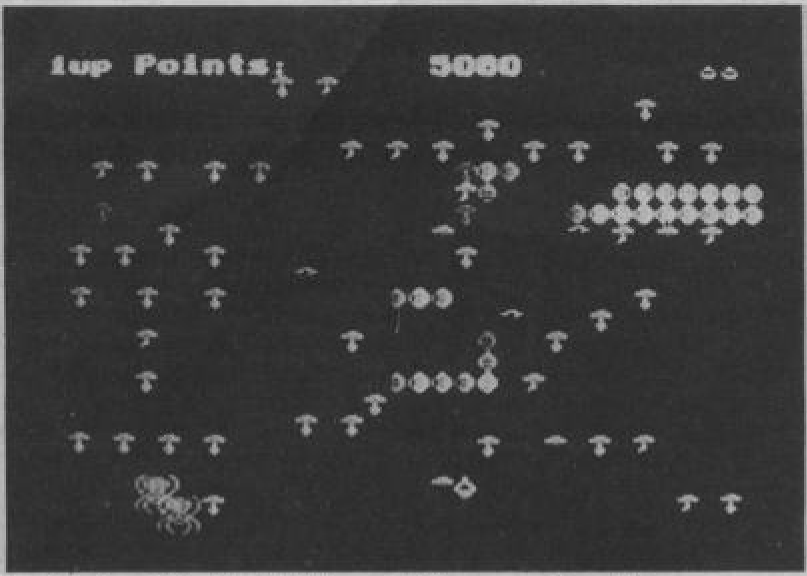
RAPEDES

Producer: **Visions**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Kevin Bezant**

If you have read the review of *G-Force* by **Euro-Byte**, you will have noticed that we said the other Euro-Byte program was *Pod*, but that it is being marketed by **Visions** under the name of *Rapedes*. However *Pod* is written by **Boris Baginski**, whereas *Rapedes* is written by *Kevin Bezant*. Are Bezant and Baginski one and the same? Both programs under their own names are availble and a quick glance at the graphics will convince anyone that these two are one and the same program – even if the authors are not! There are a few minor differences which we point out before the Criticism.

Rapedes is in fact a classic 'Centipede.' Your ship may more left and right as well as up and down to about one-third the screen height. There are green mushrooms which erode with four shots, a large spider and snail, red mushrooms and, as the level of play gets higher, falling centipede segments. The centipede itself is made of alternating blue and yellow circles.

The principal differences between *Rapedes* and *Pod* (apart from the names of the author) are that *Pod* costs



A pretty classic 'Centipede' hides under the name of Repedes.

£6.45, has only one speed (fastish) and a different key layout – a rather awkward one which uses G/H left/right and Y/B up down with T/N/V/U for the diagonals. It does, however, have continuous fire, which Rapedes does not. For collectors of the unusual we would recommend buying both versions!

CRITICISM

'This is not a bad "Centipede" version but control is difficult (on both). The graphics are nothing special, although okay. I preferred *Pod* because of the autofire, especially as this is a long centipede!'

'The key responses are very good, but poorly placed keys don't help. The graphics are very fast block movement and detailed, and there is good sound. I thought the copy was a good one and accurate to the original with plenty of addictive quality.'

3 This is a good game which could have been much better if the keys were better positioned. They are hard to get used to because they are all in a row. The graphics and detail for the Hall of Fame are also good.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Sinclair keys, 6/7 left/right 8/9 up/down, Ø to fire. Eight-directional movement
Joystick: Kempston, ZX 2
Keyboard play: very responsive, although awkward to use
Use of colour: good
Graphics: simple, but effective with detail and fast
Sound: average
Skill levels: 5 speeds
Lives: 3
Features: 1 or 2-player games
General rating: above average to good.

Use of computer	52%
Graphics	63%
Playability	64%
Getting started	64%
Addictive qualities	62%
Value for money	61%
Overall	**61%**

SPACE SHUTTLE

Producer: **Microdeal**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£8.00**
Language: **BASIC**

'You are about to fly the world's most sophisticated flight vehicle,' it says in the flight manual enclosed with the tape. This is of course the famous Space Shuttle. Your mission is to take off, park yourself in orbit, move yourself up to a malfunctioning satellite and retrieve it with the remote control arm, then fire the retros and descend back to earth. After re-entry is accomplished you must then land the Shuttle on a long runway in the desert before receiving your debriefing.

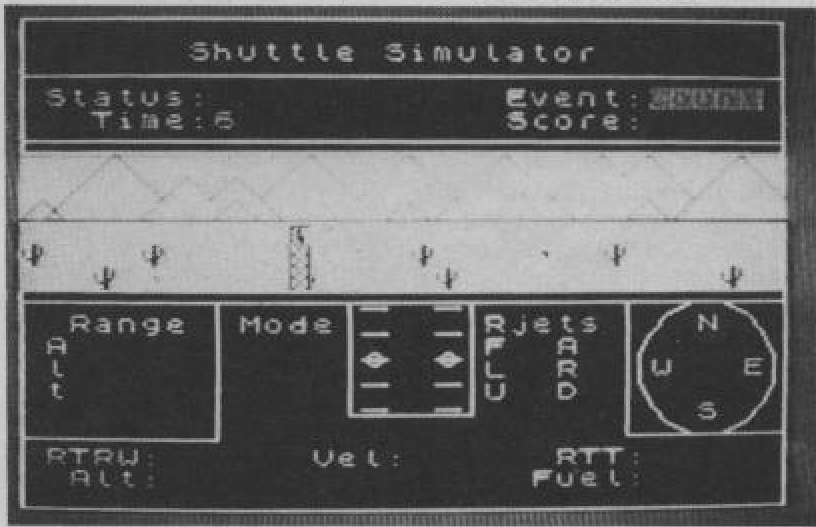
Space Shuttle is more of a simulation than it is a game. The opening screen depicts your view, as pilot, looking out of the shuttle port at the desert outside, backed by mountains. Some cacti and a gantry are visible, the countdown is going. When ignition sequence begins the view scrolls downward as you lift into blue sky, pass small clouds and finally climb into the black of space with a few small stars visible. From the orbit you must move the shuttle forward to make acquisition with the satellite. When this is done the view outside shows the satellite in position nearby, and the bay doors, which may be opened. Then the remote arm may be activated and guided to make contact with the satellite and both withdrawn into the bay. There is a time limit on this section, after which the arm withdraws whether or not you have acquired the satellite.

Once the doors are shut, re-entry occurs automatically until the view clears to show you the desert landing strip approaching.

The tape is accompanied by a detailed manual. Instrumentation includes range and altitude, propulsion by reaction jets, real-time mission clock, range to the end of the runway, altitude, velocity and reaction jet fuel remaining.

CRITICISM

'Don't forget that the most difficult thing is to land! The take-off looks quite detailed and is done quite well. Moving the shuttle around to acquire



Prepare for shuttle ignition 5-4-3-2-1



the satellite is a very easy performance and I do think the satellite could have been better drawn with more detail and colour. Landing is very hard, perhaps too hard. Throughout, the use of colour is only fair in fact, and although the graphics are smooth, they are very slow, and the sound is poor. On the whole the game is of a poor standard and not worth buying.'

'This game is a little similar to Flight Simulation *and requires some skill, although how you land I'm not sure, it's quite difficult. The instruments are well defined with hi-res graphics, but the sound is disappointing.'*

'It says there are five phases which require skill. Take-off is all handled by the computer, as is re-entry. Parking the shuttle near the satellite is very simple, virtually automatic; getting hold of the satellite is also simple enough, with the only difficulty being that the end of your arm must make contact with the lower point of the satellite. Only landing poses any real problem. All the way through, the simulation is done using so few instruments that it barely deserves to be called a simulation at all. The graphics throughout are disappointing and simple with the drawing of the bay doors and the satellite looking as though they come from a game two years old.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors, plus =forward, B=back, O=open doors, C=close doors
Joystick: Protek, AGF, ZX 2, Kempston
Keyboard play: slow
Use of colour: average
Graphics: good resolution, smooth, but slow and lacking imagination
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 1
Lives:
Screens: 5
General rating: lacks sufficient detail to be a real simulation, and lacks sufficient content to be better than average.

Use of computer	69%
Graphics	55%
Playability	50%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	46%
Value for money	43%
Overall	**55%**

Pinball Wizard

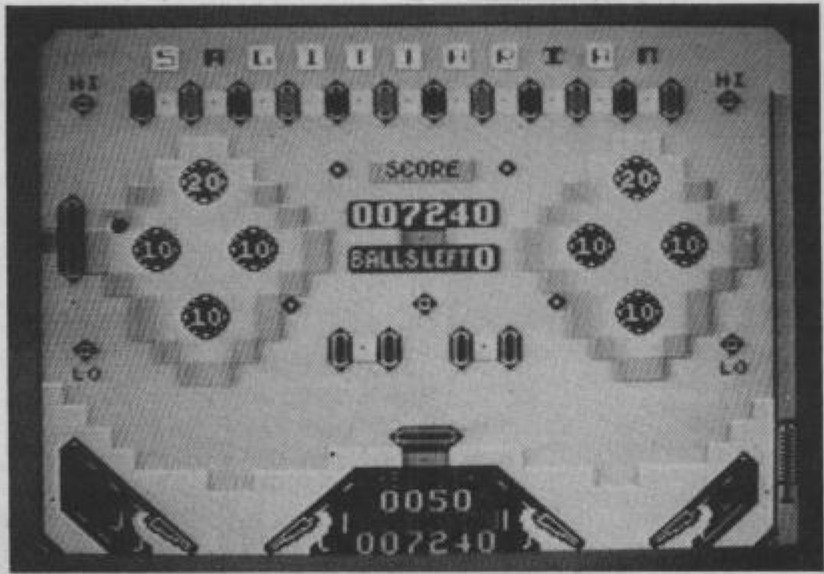
Producer: **C.P. Software**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Sagittarian Software**

Why spend money in the arcades any more? For the modest outlay of the price of this program, you can now play pinball in the comfort of your own home. The layout of the table is quite traditional with a row of 12 bumpers at the top and two collections of bonus targets to either side. These are arranged in a diamond shape with a 20-point target at the top and three 10-point targets beneath. There is a high bonus gate to the left edge of the table, one in the centre and one at the bottom in the middle. In addition there are Hi and Lo targets and two central bumper gates below the scoring window.

To the right is the ball launcher. Pressing the fire key causes the spring to pull back and then return, and continue doing this until you release the firing key. In this way it is possible to control the strength of the shot desired.

At the base are two sets of flippers, each with an independent right and left arm with exit gates between them. Two more exit channels run at the edge sides of the flippers. The score window looks authentic with the digits flicking up just as they would in a real table. Below that is another window with the number of balls left to the player.

Hitting any of the rollover targets at the top of the table will light the letter above it (S-A-G-I-T-T-A-R-I-A-N) and any of these targets subsequently hit will increase the bonus by 50 points to a maximum value of a freeball once all the letters have been lit.



The first computer game for deaf, dumb and blind kids.

CRITICISM

'It may not have quite all the thrills of a noisy arcade, but this is definitely one of the best simulations of a table-top game I have seen. Of course, a lot of the graphics don't have to move very much, so it has been possible to concentrate attention on the ball, which moves around with extraordinary realism. Using the flippers is simplicity itself and they work very effectively. When I first started playing the game I thought that a few minutes would suffice, and then found that a couple of hours had passed and I was still at it. Excellent.'

'This simulation is fast enough to be enjoyable and addictive. The sound has been well used to simulate real arcade sound. There isn't much going on graphically, but what does move moves very smoothly. Perhaps one aspect that isn't too realistic is that the ball can spend quite a long time playing by itself, bouncing from target to target.'

'I missed the opportunity to "tilt" but otherwise I was very impressed with this game. The colours are well used, it has the best effect of a moving ball I've seen yet in a Spectrum game, and it manages to be very addictive – not usually the case with these sort of games on the computer. I would say that as a change to zapping or even adventuring, *Pinball Wizard* has it made.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q to T left flippers, Y to P right flippers, 6 to zero for launching the ball
Joystick: none – none needed
Use of colour: good
Graphics: large, detailed and smooth
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5 balls
General rating: good to very good, and addictive.

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	70%
Playability	78%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	63%
Overall	**71%**

The Devil Rides In

Producer: **Carnell Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **David Abrahams**

You are a wizard in battle with the legions of hell. Your defence consists of a magic circle, which you cannot leave, and a talisman to destroy the hellish army.

In the first screen your magic circle is surrounded by several ghosts, which float lazily around, firing off the occasional green fire ball at you. Your 'talisman' acts like a laser to destroy the ghosts. The fireballs weaken your strength if they hit you, three being fatal. Running into the edge of your magic circle does the same thing.

In the second screen, the scale has been reduced, and small spiders have built a web around your circle to protect the big spiders firing at you from being harmed by your rays. The object is burn away the web so you can fire through again. The third screen has little devils scurrying around the circle, not very dangerous until hit by the rays from your talisman. In screens 4 and 5 the Angel of Death himself appears, and screen 5 brings forth the winged demons and skeletons which steal bits from your circle. The demons require two direct hits before being destroyed.

Between games a 12 hour clock face appears and counts down the final few seconds before the game commences.

CRITICISM

'The cassette box and general presentation is very good, and leads you to expect a pretty good game. The actuality on screen is a bit different. Although the pixel movement graphics are to be commended for their smoothness, the actual graphics are boring, small and very very slow.

'I've never seen a game quite like this one before, and I hope I never will again. It's an original enough idea, but its main let down is the sluggish response of the keys. The hellish army moves about well, but colour and sound could have been better. Not a game I could recommend because of its lack of content.'

'In some vague respects this resembles one of those older 'Berserk' type games. Machine code and graphics have come quite a way, but I don't think the ideas behind this one have moved much at all. Small characters and slow movement don't improve it. Only the winged demons held me in any thrall, and it's a long wait to see them.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursor keys with 9 for diagonal rotation and Ø to fire, or a rather daft arrangement of A/L left/right and X/M up/down with SPACE to fire
Joystick: AGF and Protek
Keyboard play: responsive but slow action
Use of colour: fair
Graphics: very smooth but slow
Sound: poor
Skill: levels: 4
Lives: 3
Screens: 6
General rating: a surprisingly uninteresting game despite the scenario.

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	69%
Playability	45%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qualities	42%
Value for money	48%
Overall	**53%**



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